

TRANSNATIONAL RELIGION AND SECULAR INSTITUTIONS:  
STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY IN HUMAN  
RIGHTS ADVOCACY

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# TRANSNATIONAL RELIGION AND SECULAR INSTITUTIONS: STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY IN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

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This dissertation examines the influence of international institutions on religious NGO claims making. An analysis of religious participation in Human Rights addresses three general questions. First, how has the rationalization of the human rights field influenced levels of religious mobilization in human rights? Second, how, and through what mechanisms, do religious NGO frames transform as a result of participation in secular international institutions? Third, how, and through what mechanisms, is access to human rights institutions associated with religious and regional characteristics of NGO? These questions are addressed through analyses of 24 key-informant interviews, United Nations documents and press releases pertaining to the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and an original dataset comprised of 591 religious human rights organizations.

First, religious NGO foundings over the past century show that religious movement into the public sphere increased while Human Rights was becoming a highly bureaucratized regime with international institutions at its core. Interviews with religious NGO members confirm that the increase in religious NGO foundings over the past fifty years does not indicate cooptation of religious NGOs for the pursuit of secular agendas. Rather, religion still serves as the

primary motivating force behind human rights activism among religious NGOs.

Second, analyses of interviews and United Nations documents reveal two strategies – discursive secularization and procedural rationalism – that religious groups use to assert claims, to create alliances with other NGOs, and to minimize conflict in situations where religious and secular human rights norms conflict. Religious NGOs use these strategies to capitalize on advantages and mitigate disadvantages associated with religious affiliation in terms of alliance formation and competition for funding within Human Rights.

Third, binomial logistic regression reveals that NGO consultative status with international institutions systematically varies by religious affiliation and location of secretariat. This variation is explained by the intersection of two types of variables: those indicating conformity to hegemonic principles and those indicating organizational resource capacity. In spite of institutional differentiation, religion not only remains relevant in the public sphere, but also continues to be influenced by relationships with states at the transnational level of analysis.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Evelyn Louise Bush was born in Cleveland, Ohio on January 3, 1967. She received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Xavier University in 1989. After working for several years in the field of mental health, she received her Master of Arts in Sociology from the College of William and Mary, where she developed in interest in religion and social movements. Her master's thesis, which was titled Religion and Environmentalism, was completed in 1996. In 2005, she was awarded a Ph.D. in Sociology from Cornell University, where she studied transnational contentious politics and international institutions. In addition to her dissertation, she has published research on farmers' protest in the European Union. Evelyn Bush is currently an Assistant Professor at Fordham University in New York City, where she teaches courses on religion, globalization and social movements.

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CHAPTER ONE  
THE SACRED AND SECULAR IN  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

*So let us today, from this great centre of global community, reaffirm every man and woman's fundamental right to freedom of religion....*

*Where governments and authorities fail to protect these freedoms, it is at once an affront and a menace. Where religions and their adherents are persecuted, defamed, assaulted or denied due process, we are all diminished, our societies undermined. There must be no room in the twenty-first century for religious bigotry and intolerance...*

*As the world's religious and spiritual leaders, you embody humanity's deepest yearnings. You have traveled many paths to this time and place. Some of you have been imprisoned for your beliefs. Some have survived the Holocaust, or seen your people targeted for genocide. Still others have lived through other tribulations and indignities. Whatever your past, whatever your calling, and whatever the differences among you, your presence here at the United Nations signifies your commitment to our global mission of tolerance, development and peace.*

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

August 29, 2000, UN General Assembly Hall, New York

Quoted above is an excerpt from Kofi Annan's address to the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, which took place at the United Nations (UN) in August 2000. The purpose of the Summit was to bring together religious leaders from around the world to discuss how their diverse traditions might collectively contribute to a framework for building global peace. To that end, the participants hoped to create a religious advisory committee to the United Nations.

The discourse of the Summit communicated a spirit of hope – a hope that within the world's religions lay a basis for peaceful transnational cooperation. In this event, we get a sense of religion as an institution that, despite its own internal problems with war and conflict, nonetheless operates according to a logic that somehow transcends, and is to a certain degree detached from, that of the secular political world. In Kofi Annan's address, we get a glimpse of diverse religions being discursively constructed as equally worthy of a sacred institutional space, one that is protected from the potentially destructive impositions of political interests and conflicts. This was the spirit conveyed in the official discourse of the Summit, and presumably in the hearts and minds of the participants.

Practice, however, was another matter, and posed a conspicuous challenge to the integrity of the Summit's discourse. Although over 1,000 religious and spiritual leaders from around the world, and from all major faiths, were invited to the summit, one very important figure was left off the guest list – the Dalai Lama. In spite of the fact that he represents over 15 million Buddhists globally and is a Nobel Peace

Prize recipient, the Dalai Lama was excluded from the Summit as a result of protests from the Chinese government and Chinese religious leaders. In reference to the spiritual leader's opposition to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, his detractors described him as a "turmoil-maker instead of a peace-maker" and therefore inappropriate for inclusion in a peace summit. Since northern governments were concerned not to offend China during a period that coincided with sensitive economic negotiations, the Dalai Lama's invitation was withheld.

Once news broke of this renowned spiritual leader's exclusion from the Summit, transnational protest poured out from religious and secular circles alike, mainly in the forms of petitions, withdrawal from participation in the Summit, and public statements condemning the UN's failure to issue "His Holiness" an invitation. One of the more publicized criticisms came from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who wrote to Kofi Annan stating that, had he initially planned to attend the Summit, he would have "withdrawn as a small protest against a very sad aberration."<sup>1</sup> Tutu further commented that the exclusion of the Dalai Lama "... totally undermines the integrity of the UN and the credibility of the summit."<sup>2</sup>

Subsequent to the outpouring of public protest, the summit's organizers extended a late invitation to the Dalai Lama, asking him to give a speech to the Summit participants at a nearby hotel. The international celebrity gracefully declined the invitation, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Scoop News Agent, Friday, August 25, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News, Friday, August 2, 2000.

citing a prior commitment. In lieu of his attendance, he sent a written address in support of the general goals of the Summit. When the Buddhist delegation read his address, members of the Chinese government walked out in protest.

At first glance, this story might strike the observer as a clear-cut, realist account of the epiphenomenal position of culture in international relations. The actions of each of the relevant parties – the conference organizers, the Dalai Lama, the Chinese government – can easily be explained as politically or economically motivated. Whether examined from the standpoint of Communists, Buddhists or Neoliberals in the story, the underlying issues at stake, (territorial sovereignty, trade relations), were interest-based. And regardless of the “rightness” or “wrongness” of the Chinese occupation, the Dalai Lama’s presence at the UN would indeed have raised questions about the Chinese government’s actions in Tibet,<sup>3</sup> thus violating UN rules requiring nongovernmental participation to be strictly apolitical. Indeed, on the surface, the entire spectacle can be understood in terms of matters of state, politics and economics. Religion, from this perspective, is incidental, a mere “tool” for expressing what are ultimately economic interests.

But if we dig a bit deeper, the event raises additional questions that are not so easily answered through straightforward appeals to realism and economic rationalism. First, there is the fact, in and of itself, of an event called the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders being held at the United Nations, a

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<sup>3</sup> In The News, September 2, 2000.

primary purpose of which was to create a global religious advisory group to the UN.<sup>4</sup> And, in this regard, the Millennium Summit is hardly an isolated case. Religious groups have been adopting increasingly assertive stances at the UN on a broad array of issues since the early 1990s, in many instances further advancing “cultural rights” claims that were prominently debated during the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. In recent years, religious groups have wielded considerable influence in the drafting of UN declarations on critical issues such as human rights for women, HIV/AIDS, and population and development (Buss and Herman 2003; Sunder 2002). Meanwhile, the legitimacy of religious authority in the transnational public sphere is strengthened through highly publicized events like the Millennium Summit.

Religious involvement is also increasing in other major international institutions. For instance, since the mid-1990s, the World Bank has sponsored a series of conferences aimed at bringing religious leadership into closer dialogue with the Bank and the international development community. Meanwhile, in spite of depressed levels of church attendance in “secularizing Europe” (Bruce 1996), the European Commission has been the site of concerted efforts to improve dialogue with religious communities and leaders in increasingly formal and structured ways. One explicitly stated goal of this effort has been to allow religious leaders and communities to influence “the meaning, spiritual direction, and ethical dimension of

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<sup>4</sup> Christian Century, September 13, 2000.



European unification and the policies developed in this context” (Jansen 2000, p. 104).

Second, the higher profile that religion is adopting in international institutions is not only relevant in terms of religion. It also tells us something about the impact of civil society more generally. In the case of the Millennium Summit, protests against the exclusion of “His Holiness” not only occurred, but they also had an impact, culminating in the issuance of an invitation for the Dalai Lama to speak to the Summit, despite the wishes of the Chinese government. Normative claims issuing from global civil society mattered.

Granted, one might still maintain a strictly materialist stance and dismiss the UN’s recognition of religious and nonstate actors as mere “window dressing” – symbolic nods in the direction of civil society in order to garner public support for an institution that ultimately exists to promote the economic and political interests of its member states. But even if this were the case, we must concede that, for some reason, this window dressing is perceived to be effective – even necessary. At one level or another, the architects of international institutions recognize that religion and spirituality are powerful sources of meaning through which many publics interpret their membership in local, national and even global communities. That the Dalai Lama’s status as a religious leader should outweigh concerns about his status as the leader of a political, anti-government movement is no small matter, especially in an institution such as the

UN, in which national sovereignty has traditionally stood as a sacred principle.

This entire spectacle should give us pause to consider not only the influence of non-state actors in international relations, but the additional leverage that accrues to non-state actors when they claim the authority of a religious tradition. On the one hand, perhaps the support for the Dalai Lama at the Millennium Summit was an aberration, an exception to an otherwise secularizing trend in global politics. But, on the other, perhaps this event is part of a larger pattern of increasing religious legitimacy and influence on the world stage, in spite of the rationalization of global politics through integration of markets and construction of international institutions. The possibility of the latter scenario raises important questions for scholars of both secularization and globalization about the relationship between religious and secular authority as we move to the transnational level of analysis. That is, it provides us with a new angle from which to examine *the relationship between rationalism and public religion*, which will be the general topic of this dissertation.

In using the term “rationalism” I am referring to the following characteristics of organizational fields: institutional differentiation, bureaucratization, professionalization, standardization, quantification, and the application of legal and scientific principles to social problems. Each of these characteristics will be illustrated in greater detail in the next section. I am particularly interested in rationalism as it manifests itself in formal institutions, particularly the international institutions that provide the core of the global human

rights regime. Although institutionalization does constitute a departure from strictly economic, i.e. market, rationalism, many of the features of formal institutions are themselves rational, regardless of whether or not they produce rational, or even intended, outcomes. Furthermore, I am not interested in rationalism as a characteristic of individual actors, but as a characteristic of social structures such as organizations, institutions, and social movement fields.<sup>5</sup>

Borrowing from Casanova, I define “public religion” as religion that is oriented toward “the public arena of moral and political contestation” (Casanova 1994, p.3). Casanova identifies three forms of secularization and points out that they can occur in tandem, in opposition, or independent of one another, and therefore must be assessed separately if we wish to move the secularization debate forward (Casanova 1994, p.211). He identifies “secularization 1) as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, 2) as the decline of religious beliefs and practices, and 3) as the marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere” (Casanova, 1994, p. 211). This study measures the third form by observing its opposite: public religion. “Public religion” stands in contrast to “privatized” religion (religion oriented toward regulation of the private sphere), and indicates a “refusal to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them” (Casanova 1994, p. 5). For the

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<sup>5</sup> Following DiMaggio and Powell (1991b: 64 – 65), by organizational field I mean those organizations that, in aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products. In term of social movements, a field would include activist organizations, NGOs, international institutions, legal establishments, universities, regulatory agencies, and the like, i.e. organizations and institutions that engage in practices and provide resources relevant to the social movement in question.

purposes of this project, the founding or operation of a religious human rights NGO would indicate an assertion of public religious authority.

In this dissertation, I will focus on one aspect of the relationship between rationalism and public religion by examining the role of international institutions in either suppressing or facilitating religious influence in national and transnational civil societies. Specifically, I will address the following question: *How do secular international institutions influence patterns and forms of religious claims-making in international politics?* Turning our attention away from the disruptive forms of contentious politics associated with religious activism, and toward religious conflict within the formal arenas of international institutions, will shed light on an important but neglected dimension of religious conflict. This dimension includes power among states, and the highly ritualized world of diplomacy wherein that power is symbolically negotiated. As the chapters that follow will demonstrate, the secular culture to which I will refer, and which constitutes international institutions, exerts an important influence on religious expression, and in patterned and predictable ways.

I will explore the influence of international institutions on religious claims-making through an analysis of religious participation in the transnational organizational field of human rights (from here on to be referred to simply as “Human Rights”). Three substantive chapters of this project will report the findings of my empirical analyses aimed at answering the following questions:

- How has the rationalization of the human rights field influenced overall levels of religious mobilization in human rights (Chapter Three)?
- How, and through what mechanisms, are religious mobilizing strategies and discourses influenced by participation in secular international institutions (Chapter Four)?
- How, and through what mechanisms, does access to international human rights institutions vary across religious traditions (Chapter Five)?

### *Why Human Rights?*

Several characteristics of the human rights field make it ideal for a study of the relationship between rationalism and public religious authority. To begin, the “origin myth” of Human Rights is that the field emerged as an outcome of enlightenment rationalism and the embrace of secular individualism as the cornerstone of rights protections. Though Enlightenment principles certainly did play a role in the field’s development, this popular account of Human Rights origins conceals the field’s historical roots in the abolitionist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a movement that was comprised of predominantly Quaker, Baptist and Methodist activists (Miller 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998). This transnational movement was organized in networks that spanned continents but nonetheless lacked a centralized, institutional base (Keck and Sikkink 1998, p. 75).

However, beginning with the establishment of the United Nations in 1948, and the explicit codification of human rights norms into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights activism increasingly cohered around the centralized structures of the UN and other international institutions, which have since served as the field's institutional core and have been the targets most frequently called upon to address human rights grievances (Risse and Sikkink 1999). The structuring of the human rights regime<sup>6</sup> around international institutions has been accompanied by an underlying rationalism that is evident in the marked bureaucratization, standardization, and professionalization that has occurred within it over the past half-century.

For example, in terms of the first feature of rationalization, bureaucratization, international institutions themselves tend to be very large bureaucratic structures, comprised of complex systems of classification, documentation, formal procedures, and chains of command. Far from being politically neutral, these bureaucratic features were developed with an eye toward the selective management of the various types of NGOs (e.g. northern, southern, scientific, activist) seeking a "seat at the table" (Pei-heng 1981, p.26). As Pei-heng points out, since the UN's establishment, "great strides have been made in bureaucratic sophistication and awareness of the proper and appropriate place of each actor in the international scheme of things" (Pei-heng 1981, p.26). Human rights advocates who wish to

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<sup>6</sup> Following Jepperson (1991, p.150), by "regime" I mean "Institutionalization in some central authority system – that is, in explicitly codified rules and sanctions – without primary embodiment in a formal organizational apparatus... With regimes, expectations focus upon monitoring and sanctioning by some form of a differentiated, collective, "center."

have their grievances heard at the UN must organize in ways that enable them to navigate these bureaucracies. At the most basic level, international institutional participation requires the adoption of an organizational form, such as the “NGO,” which is recognized as legitimate within the human rights field.

One way that NGOs achieve legitimacy in Human Rights is through compliance with a second form of rationalization – standardization. Although over time Human Rights has become increasingly diverse in terms of the cultural and national identities of participating NGOs, by and large, human rights NGOs exhibit common characteristics and behaviors that allow for the effective coordination of their operations and signal their legitimacy within the field. These characteristics typically include public statements of support for United Nations programs and principles, the use of either English or French as a working language, facility with western technology and models of bureaucratic management, and the use of standard sets of procedures for reporting human rights violations.

Related to standardization is a third feature: professionalization. In contrast to their predominantly Quaker, Baptist and Methodist predecessors (Miller 1996), by and large, today's human rights advocates are members of professional NGOs and are often, themselves, professional advocates. *Human Rights Internet* reports worldwide 96 professional associations, 389 academic or university-based programs, 283 educational and training institutions, and 620 legally-oriented organizations (e.g. bar associations, law firms, legal resource centers) that focus on human rights. In other words, the

human rights regime not only has international institutions at its core, but it is also embedded in array of linked institutional structures that provide it with legitimacy, material support and coherence. That is, Human Rights exhibits the formal properties of an organizational field.

The substantial presence of universities and legal establishments is associated with an important cultural transformation in the field - the transformation of human rights discourse away from its roots in natural law and religious traditions, to a firm anchoring in the languages of positive law and science. Hence, religious NGOs operating at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not only confronted with a more pluralist organizational field than their predecessors were, but a more thoroughly secular discursive environment as well. I will refer to this transformation from religious to secular language as *discursive secularization*.

Due to their centrality in the field, international institutions play a large role in defining the terms for participation in Human Rights - terms that are clearly rooted in Enlightenment rationalism, and “world cultural principles” that I will describe in Chapter Two. For example, one need only read the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for explicit endorsement of principles such as universalism, individualism and world citizenship. Likewise, the language used in volumes of human rights covenants, conventions, and declarations since the Universal Declaration have been consistent enough with the latter to warrant the description “routine.”



According to the modernization paradigm that the social sciences have assumed throughout much of their development (which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter), the extensive rationalization entailed in the consolidation of the human rights regime should be associated with a decline in public religious authority. Yet, it is far from clear that any such decline has occurred. Religion, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, continues to be an important factor in both human rights activism and conflict, and its influence does not appear to be waning (Chapter Three).

The persistence of religion in Human Rights presents us with the opportunity to examine the relationship between rationalism and religiosity, and to ask questions about the ways that religious actors engage with the principles and rules embedded in a predominantly secular movement field (Chapter Four). For example, does rationalism in Human Rights create an environment that requires religious groups to suppress religious expression as a condition of their participation? Or do religious and secular forms of human rights advocacy coexist quite comfortably? In either case, how do religious groups respond when conditions for Human Rights participation require affirmations of lifeways or practices that conflict with the religious beliefs of their members or constituencies? The fact that Human Rights is organized around an institutional core is especially useful for examining these types of questions, since formal institutions provide bounded spaces wherein we can observe the interaction between religious and secular authority, and religious and secular norms.

But the questions just posed assume two opposing and homogenous categories: sacred and secular. The organization of the field around formal institutions also makes it well suited for addressing a second set of questions, questions that pertain to religious heterogeneity. In terms of religion, the NGOs (and states) interacting within Human Rights are quite heterogeneous, including such diverse groups as secular humanists, evangelical Christians and Scientologists. In many ways, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, these groups compete with each other for resources and recognition within the human rights field. Among the resources and recognition that they compete for are formal ties to international institutions, usually in the form of consultative status.

Theoretically, this scenario allows us to examine how cultural and ideological competition play out in an institutional environment dominated by an overarching, homogenizing cultural framework. But issues of heterogeneity and competition are of more than only theoretical importance; they have practical significance for advocates and activists as well. Relations with IGOs are an important form of social capital in Human Rights - just how important becomes clear when we consider the reasons that religious NGOs pursue IGO ties in the first place.

First, most religious human rights organizations focus in part on “secular” human rights issues such as torture, slavery, or economic rights. Formal ties to IGOs allow NGOs to contribute formal input at IGO meetings and obtain access to information about ongoing developments with regard to these types of issues.

Second, consultative status with an international institution confers the legitimacy required to build alliances and seek financial support from other organizations within the field. Religious organizations that have been denied consultative status experience much difficulty obtaining support from other actors, including larger human rights NGOs, foundations and states.<sup>7</sup> This explains why even groups like “Watchtower,” whose theological doctrines declare the United Nations to be an instrument of Satan, or the World Sikh Organization, many of whose members opposes affiliation with the UN for political reasons, have nonetheless held or aggressively sought consultative status with the UN.

Third, when religious organizations are offered seats at the tables of international institutions, opportunities emerge for them to pursue interests of their own that may or may not be compatible with the dominant interpretations of human rights. Among those interests are the saving of souls and the transformation of societies in ways that are compatible with their religious beliefs and practices (Buss and Herman 2003). According to the data that I collected for Chapter Five of this dissertation, 19 percent of religious human rights NGOs focus on the issue of religious freedom, and 25 percent report the promotion of their own religious traditions as amongst their goals.<sup>8</sup> International institutions are important to these groups since they are the forums in which international laws pertaining to evangelism and religious

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<sup>7</sup> Interviews with representatives of two religious human rights organizations. One organization had been consistently denied consultative status (Ottawa, Septemeber 2000) and one organization had recently seen its consultative status revoked (Zurich, October 2000).

<sup>8</sup> This figure is derived from the dataset that I constructed for this project, the details of which are discussed in the methods section of this chapter.

minority rights are negotiated and formalized, and where the broader debates about individualist vs. collectivist interpretations of human rights are played out. The tension between religious freedom as an issue of individual choice and conscience vs. religious freedom as the right of vulnerable groups to protect their traditions from perceived threats is far from resolved, and proponents of both sides seek voice within international institutions (Thomas 2001).

Fourth, in addition to serving as forums for debate over the legal aspects of religious freedom, international institutions are arenas where religious identities are legitimated, challenged, or otherwise negotiated. Consider, for example, the NGO “Catholics for a Free Choice” and the associated See Change Movement, whose objective is to have the Vatican’s UN Permanent Observer status revoked. At stake for this NGO are not only women’s reproductive rights, but more fundamental conflicts over what it means to be Catholic, who gets to speak for Catholics, and how to define Catholic perspectives on human rights issues. Catholic identity is continually negotiated through this NGO’s and the Holy See’s competing claims within the United Nations. These negotiations over identity have the potential to influence relationships of power within as well as among religious groups. As a result, their outcomes are especially important to marginal groups, such as Scientology, whose status as a legitimate religion is often challenged in regions where they are attempting to expand, especially in Western Europe.

The religious NGOs that have formal ties with international institutions have input into these types of negotiations. Those that

lack such access do not. For all of these reasons, ties to and influence within international institutions are important indicators of stratification among religious NGOs in the world polity.

Given the characteristics of Human Rights that I have just described, the study of religious participation in Human rights can tell us much about the relationship between rationalism and religion, and hopefully shed some light on religion's persistence and resurgence in transnational public spheres.

### *Organization of the Dissertation*

Chapter Two will outline converging trends in theories of secularization and globalization, and will show how a stronger dialogue between sociologists of religion and scholars studying transnational social movements can be useful for developing a framework for understanding religious resurgence in global politics. I will then argue in favor of an institutionalist approach to understanding the relationship between religion and transnational advocacy, one that highlights the role of international institutions in selecting among social movement organizational forms.

Chapter Three makes a methodologically focused argument about the analytical boundary between the sacred and secular that is often assumed in social science research. Using data and methods that relax assumptions about sacred-secular boundaries, I will show that, contrary to the conclusions to which theories of modernization would lead us, the human rights field has not secularized alongside the rationalization of global civil society over the past century. Through

an analysis of religious NGO foundings over the past century, I will show that religious movement into the public sphere actually increased while Human Rights was becoming a highly bureaucratized and professionalized regime with international institutions at its core.

I will draw upon interviews with religious NGO members to interpret what these organizational foundings actually mean. In spite of the fact that the discourses and principles that currently buttress Human Rights at the field level are distinctly secular, I will show that the dramatic increase in religious NGO foundings does *not* indicate the systematic cooptation of religious means for the pursuit of secular ends. Rather, religion still serves as a motivating force for human rights activism within religious NGOs.

Chapter Four turns to cultural heterogeneity as a source of both cooperation and conflict in Human Rights. First, I draw upon interviews with religious NGO members to discuss that ways that religious affiliation creates both advantages and disadvantages in terms of alliance formation and competition for funding within the human rights field.

Second, Chapter Four examines the discursive strategies that religious groups use when religious and secular human rights norms collide. Specifically, I analyze the highly conflictual negotiations surrounding in the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Through an analysis of the transcripts and press reports from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, I examine how religious and secular discourses are treated within the UN and by the press. I show two things: first, argumentation based on

“fact” is valued over argumentation based on “ideology.” Second, and most important, the distinction between “fact” and “ideology” is based less on the content of the argument and more on the status of the speaker and the group she or he represents, with religious groups more likely than secular groups to be discredited as arguing from nonfactual bases. I then illustrate how religious NGOs use a combination of rationalizing tactics to navigate situations where their claims may be discredited on the basis of the speaker’s religious affiliation.

Chapter Five takes a quantitative approach to the assessment of stratification among religious groups in the human rights field. Using a dataset that I constructed of 546 religious human rights NGOs, I analyze patterns of NGO consultative status with international institutions, looking not only at variation by religion, but at global north-south differences as well. After analyzing the relative influence of two types of variables (structural and cultural) on authorization by international institutions, I argue that, in order to understand religious and national variation in consultative status, we need to take into account how hegemonic principles intersect with forms of “hard power,” including relationships with dominant states and organizational resource capacity. The theoretical implication of the analysis is that the relationship between religious and secular authority remains important in spite of institutional differentiation, especially when we consider religion and politics at the transnational level of analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TOWARD AN INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO GLOBAL RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

The research that I present in the following chapters empirically addresses two assumptions. The first assumption is that the rationalization of the public sphere is associated with a decline in the relevance of religion as a public institution. The second, and related, assumption is that, in the absence of religious establishment, religious and secular authority function essentially and necessarily in conflict, or at least concern themselves with distinctly separate spheres of society, with only minimum influence flowing between them.

It has been argued by some globalization scholars that globalization has entailed a rationalization of the public sphere at the transnational level of analysis (Featherstone 1990, p. 3). Likewise, one could argue that the globally normative model of the nation-state as the structure around which social relations are organized contains within it an implicit understanding that the nation-state is, among other things, ideally secular. If such assumptions about rationalism, institutional differentiation and globalization were accurate, and rationalism was indeed associated with the decline of public religion, globalization would mean a loss of public authority for religion at the global level of analysis.

Recent history, however, does not entirely support such a conclusion. At least in the field of contentious politics, there has been too much evidence of religious mobilization in recent decades



to uncritically support the classical secularization paradigm.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the dramatic episodes of politicized religious violence capturing headlines around the globe, religious organizations are becoming increasingly visible in international institutions, as I discussed in the previous chapter. These assertions of religious authority in both the informal and formal public spheres of international relations indicate anything but privatization.

But thus far, scholarly attempts to make sense out of interactions between religion and secular politics at the global level of analysis have been limited in scope. Although radical religious mobilization, especially in its Islamic manifestations, has received considerable attention,<sup>2</sup> social scientists have been largely silent about religion in the more mainstream world of institutional global politics.<sup>3</sup> As a result, a picture emerges of politically engaged transnational religion acting predominantly outside or against governments, and outside of non-violent, institutional channels. We are left knowing very little about the formal institutional spaces where religious

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<sup>1</sup> By “secularization theory,” or “classical secularization paradigm,” I am referring to synthesis of modernization theories aptly articulated in Peter Berger’s *The Sacred Canopy* (Berger 1967). In this text, around which a considerable portion of the secularization debate revolves, Berger borrows heavily from a variety of classical social theorists and philosophers such as Hegel, Feuerbach and Nietzsche. He borrows most heavily, however, from Durkheim’s writings on symbolism, ritual and social solidarity in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1916) and *The Division of Labor in Society* (1902), Weber’s writings on the rationalization of the lifeworld in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958) and Marx’s writings on alienation and objectification (see especially, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1846*, and *The German Ideology - Theses on Feuerbach* [1939]).

<sup>2</sup> Among the most popular books addressing religion and political violence have been Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), Mark Juergensmeyer’s *Terror in the Mind of God* (2003), and Benjamin Barber’s *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1995).

<sup>3</sup> Scholars are increasingly studying the relationship between transnational religion and states, but their research has been largely state-focused in terms of methodology. Examples include Byrnes (2001), Warner and Wenner (2002), Della Cava (2001) and many of the contributions in the edited volume by Rudolph and Piscatori (1997).

contention intersects with negotiations over power among states.<sup>4</sup> How can this “blind eye” best be explained?

It is my contention that religion often remains “under the radar” in scholarship on institutionally focused transnational politics because of an implicit reification of the practical boundary between religious and secular practices, organizations and institutions. Their arenas of influence are researched as if they were mutually exclusive, their interests as if they were unrelated or mutually antagonistic.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true for research that relies on quantitative data for evidence. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the assumption of this strict boundary is evident not only in research designs and foci, but in the classification systems of data sets commonly used to study organizational behavior in global civil society.

One implication of this methodological separation between religious and secular spheres is that it keeps us from understanding the influence of religion in sectors of civil society that we usually do not immediately associate with religion. This is especially the case in social movement sectors such as human rights, environmental protection and labor rights. By bringing religion into sharper relief within these movement sectors, we can better understand the various

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<sup>4</sup> Two notable exceptions include Voye (1999) and Buss and Herman (2003). In addition, legal scholars and philosophers of law have written in detail about the technicalities of human rights law as it pertains to religion. However, from what I have read, legal research on the topic is largely divorced from theory about religious transformation as it is argued in the social sciences.

<sup>5</sup> Unless, of course, the research under consideration is oriented toward public regulation of what we typically regard as the “private sphere” in secular democracies, e.g. issues of sexuality and reproduction. But in these cases, it is politics, not religion, that is seen as violating the boundary between sacred and secular by not confining its activities to its culturally assigned, public, domain. In contrast, this dissertation will be examining the converse scenario, wherein religion violates the sacred-secular boundary through political participation in the public sphere, i.e. through claims-making in the field of human rights.

sources of ideas, networks, and material support that comprise the associational life required for social movement maintenance and survival.

A second implication of assuming a practical boundary between religious and secular spheres is that it deters us from asking questions about the mutually constitutive relationship between religion and the state in international politics - a relationship that is grossly undertheorized. In particular, the emphasis on institutional differentiation as “separation” distracts us from studying mutually influential, and at times beneficial, relationships that exist between the two types of institutions beyond their agreements to stay out of each other’s affairs. In the context of transnational politics, such an impoverished understanding of the relationship between religious and secular authority might well obscure important advantages and disadvantages that flow between those religious institutions and secular governments that share common developmental histories. In light of the fact that the politically dominant states in the international system share a more or less common religious heritage (Judeo-Christian religion), it makes sense to consider how structural and ideological affinities created through centuries of interdependent institutional development might currently influence the outcomes of interfaith conflicts in transnational politics.

Neglect of these types of questions makes it all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking in terms of simplistic, value-laden dichotomies that analytically treat “good secular democracies,” differently from “bad theocracies.” We need to account for the fact

that it is not only through theocracies that religious and secular power interact, potentially producing mutually beneficial outcomes; the same can be true of religion and politics across secular states. The nature of the link between religious and secular authority in secular societies may differ in important ways from the link that exists within theocracies, but the link persists nonetheless, and is worthy of analytical attention. This relationship becomes especially important at the transnational level of analysis, as religious issues seem to be capturing an increasingly prominent place in international conflicts.

In the burgeoning field of globalization studies, scholars focusing on international institutions and non-state actors have come largely from subfields (e.g. economic sociology, development sociology, international political economy, economics) that have analytically ignored religion until quite recently.<sup>6</sup> As a result, research on the cultural aspects of globalization has been conducted largely without the benefit of theoretical and conceptual tools that sociologists of religion have been using for decades to study the ever-transforming relationship between religious and secular authority. At the same time, sociologists of religion have yet to make substantial empirical forays into the analysis of religious transformation as a distinctly transnational (as opposed to comparative) phenomenon. It will be instructive then to bring sociological scholarship on intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into dialogue with relevant work in the sociology of religion. The next segment of this chapter entails my

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<sup>6</sup> An important exception is Roland Robertson's work on religion and globalization (Robertson 1992).

attempt to facilitate such a dialogue. My aim is to convince the reader that research on the cultural and normative aspects of globalization can be vastly improved through a reassessment of the relationship between religion and secular institutions, especially in the current global context where secular democracies are the norm.

### *The Legacy of Secularization Theory*

Secularization has been of central importance to sociologists since the discipline's founding. Our most commonly recognized classical theorists all addressed religious transformation as a key component of the sweeping world historical changes that they observed and predicted. For Durkheim, religion would give way to science, while the plausibility structures of the former would progressively weaken as a result of not only of the development of the latter, but as a result of urbanization and the division of labor in society. Weber foresaw the disenchantment of the world, as religion would come to be eclipsed by instrumental and economic rationalism. For Marx, the "opiate of the masses" would inevitably be discarded along with a shedding of false consciousness that would occur as an outcome of the contradictions of capitalism. Indeed, the sweeping processes of industrialization, urbanization, and the Enlightenment left their imprint on Sociology's founders and their ideas about the fate of religion.

Equally important to 19<sup>th</sup> century theorists, however, were undoubtedly their not-so-distant memories of more concrete historical events – not only the Protestant Reformation, but more recently, the

American and French Revolutions. Consistent with the centrality of issues of church and state to these events, classical secularization theory developed not only according to the progressive and linear logic reflective of the spirit of the Modern Age; it also came to place considerable emphasis on institutional differentiation, especially religious disestablishment. Accordingly, the secularization paradigm came to emphasize the separation of religion and state, along with other forms of societal fragmentation, as creating the conditions for subsequent forms of religious decline, especially pluralism, privatization, and the associated de-legitimation of plausibility structures essential to religion's status as "sacred canopy" (Berger 1967). That is, in the absence of state support for a particular religious institution, and through the introduction of competing forms of religion in a pluralist market, religion loses its authority as *the* institution through which individuals collectively define their social world. Describing states (and other institutions) as being "emancipated" from religious control, secularization theorists identified institutional differentiation as a precursor to the erosion of religion's capacity to function as a public institution, as secular institutions would gradually usurp religious functions. Seen through this lens, religious and secular institutions are caught in a near zero-sum battle for influence and control. Throughout much of Sociology's development, this model was seldom questioned.

During the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, sociologists of religion began to challenge the secularist model of institutional differentiation and religious decline. Although

challenges emerged from a variety of sources, one of the most controversial and influential challenges was launched from the exchange theoretic perspective. Research from this perspective served as a foundation for a “New Paradigm in the Sociology of Religion,” (Warner 1993), and subsequently, a continually evolving “secularization debate.”

Consistent with the markets-based approach that informs exchange theory more generally,<sup>7</sup> exchange theorists argue that religious pluralism, which they translate into the language of “religious economies,” improves the quantity and quality of religious consumer choices. Since greater consumer choice is theoretically associated with greater overall consumption, pluralism, by extension, should be associated with increases in religious involvement. Rational choice scholars support this argument with evidence of increased levels of religious mobilization<sup>8</sup> in environments characterized by high levels of religious pluralism and competition, especially in urban areas and in the United States (Finke and Stark 1988; Finke and Stark 1992).

At first glance, the religious economies model is appealing. Changing the direction of the relationship between disestablishment and religious decline from positive to negative is no small theoretical accomplishment. It challenges the fundamental assumption that the flourishing of religion and the rationalization of societal subsystems

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<sup>7</sup> See, especially, Gary Becker, 1976.

<sup>8</sup> Finke and Stark (1988) operationalize religious mobilization as the number of adherents to religious traditions. They do not make any distinctions regarding religious adherence as a set of private vs. public practices. In other words, the word “mobilization” does not, for Finke and Stark, have anything to do with participation in institutional or contentious politics, and should not be confused with the term’s usage in studies of social movements.

are necessarily incompatible. This assumption, which lies at the heart of modernization theory, is hardly a trivial matter for the social sciences.

Yet, upon closer inspection, exchange theoretic research still leaves important aspects of secularization theory intact. For one, sociologists who measure religious growth and decline usually rely upon indicators of religious mobilization that assume from the outset that religion occupies a distinct sphere of activity, separate from other sectors of civil society. The most common indicators include frequency of church attendance, frequency of prayer, financial contributions to churches, and the like.<sup>9</sup> As a result, we are left with scant knowledge of religious authority as publicly or politically engaged. Increased measures of the indicators that they use are not incompatible with secularization defined as privatization, or the retreat of religion from the public sphere.

Second, exchange theoretic predictions about the outcomes of institutional differentiation maintain the assumption, though from a different angle, that religion and state exist essentially in conflict. For secularization theory, that conflict took the form of the state and secular society progressively taking over the social functions previously performed by religious institutions. For exchange theorists, that conflict takes the form of state regulation repressing the capacity for religious entrepreneurs to freely innovate, thus

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the secularization debate that aptly describes in greater detail the arguments on each side of the secularization debate and the types of indicators that are most commonly used and argued over as evidence, see Warner (1993).



diminishing their ability to meet the demands of religious consumers (Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Stark and Finke 2000).

Related to this, from the exchange theoretic perspective, separation of religion and state is reified. In the absence of religious establishment, the state plays no role in determining religious outcomes. The market (i.e. variation in consumer preferences) for religious goods will determine specific forms of religious transformation, including religious variation in growth and decline. That is, religious competition in secular states is purely a function of supply and demand, and is assumed to be a politically neutral process.

An alternative approach is to search for ways that power and political processes might be associated with patterns of religious transformation and competition, even in the absence of formal religious establishment. As political scientist Anthony Gill points out, when examining religious competition, it is necessary to go beyond the issue of religion-state separation and “...pay careful attention to the political negotiations surrounding a broad array of regulatory laws affecting religion. Zoning regulations, levels of taxation, media restrictions, and government subsidies all impose differential cost on religious evangelization. This calls, then, for a political economy of religion, which incorporates the interests of political actors into the study of religious markets” (Gill 2001). De-regulation may be associated with increases in overall levels of religious participation, but on its own, it is insufficient for explaining how power and politics influence variation across religions in terms of growth, decline, and internal transformation. Gill’s emphasis on

political processes within secular states has potential to move our arguments about institutional differentiation and religious transformation forward considerably.

Consider, for instance, the work of Jose Casanova. Arguing from a slightly different angle, Casanova examines the link between political structures and social movements in order to explain why precisely those states where religious institutions historically enjoyed establishment are the states that have seen the most pronounced religious decline, whether defined as privatization or decline in religious beliefs and practices. Providing an alternative to the markets-based explanation offered by rational choice scholars, Casanova illustrates that the mechanisms linking religious establishment and religious decline are found not in state control of religious markets, but in the anti-clerical movements that emerged in response to church establishment. In places where such movements did not emerge, the Catholic Church has assumed a much more public role in recent decades (Casanova 1994, Ch. 2).

Gill and Keshavarian have made similar progress studying the relationship between political processes and public religious authority by focusing on the conditions under which states either form alliances with religious institutions or take more aggressive, conflictual stances toward them (Gill 2001). For example, their study of state building in Iran and Mexico demonstrates how “church-state cooperation is likely in the initial stages of the state-building process when opponents to the existing state leaders are prevalent. Yet, as state officials succeed in eliminating secular rivals, the bargaining power of religious

authorities wanes,” resulting in an increase in church-state conflict and a subsequent loss of religious institutional influence (Gill and Keshavarian 1999, p.457-458).

Gill’s institutionalist approach, and especially his emphasis on state building, can be usefully applied at the global level of analysis. Historically, transnational religious expansion and the quest for converts have been anything but stories about unfettered competition among providers of religious goods in an open market. Rather, they have been deeply entrenched and implicated in colonial and other forms of state-driven conquest. Although the link may no longer be as explicit as in colonial history, I propose that religious and secular power are still linked in reciprocally advantageous ways in their parallel quests for global influence. But new actors, practices, and institutions need to be taken into account. This is where the study of globalization, social movements and international institutions enters the picture.

### *Globalization, Movements, and Institutions*

One distinguishing characteristic of the current wave of globalization is its coordination through international institutions, which have developed at an astounding rate over the past 30 years. According to the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, in 1909, there were only 37 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in existence. In 1951, there were 123 and in 1972, there were 280 IGOs. In contrast, by

2003, the number of IGOs had risen to 7,306.<sup>10</sup> The most obvious function of international institutions is the creation of rules according to which international relations, and now globalization and its associated processes and practices, operate. Contrary to popular discourses that construct globalization as the outcome of abstract autonomous forces (e.g. “the market, “technological development”) beyond the control of individuals or states, globalization is, in important ways, authored and enabled by strategic actors, including states (Panitch 1996; Sklair 2002). International institutions are important instruments through which these strategic actors exert authority over processes associated with globalization, and over each other (McMichael 2002). Examples of this authority include the development of patent law, the enforcement of international trade rules and restrictions, regulations pertaining to environmental protection, labor rights and migration, the development of standards in technology, and the expansion of a body of human rights law.

As with the state-building processes explored by Gill and Keshavarian, the construction of international institutions may be opening opportunities for religious actors to exert influence in the transnational public sphere. One reason for this opening of opportunities is that international institutions, like states, need legitimacy in order to operate unimpeded, especially in the early phases of their formation.<sup>11</sup> Religious organizations, insofar as their

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<sup>10</sup> These statistics, and others on IGOs and INGOs, are readily accessible from the Union of International Association’s website: [www.uiaa.org](http://www.uiaa.org).

<sup>11</sup> Consider, for example, the protests that “shut down” the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Seattle. One common grievance among the protest’s diverse participants was that the WTO lacked transparency and accountability. That is, the WTO was not and is not perceived as legitimate in the eyes of many left-leaning progressive groups in global civil society.

missionary and humanitarian endeavors have embedded them in local contexts around the globe for decades, even centuries, are often well positioned to confer such legitimacy (Johnston and Figa 1988).<sup>12</sup>

A second reason that international institution-building opens opportunities for religious groups is that the latter are often capable of providing much needed material support and infrastructure. Just as states rely upon domestic civil society organizations to deliver certain public goods to their citizens, international institutions are in part dependent upon the cooperation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to support their international programs (Wapner 1995; Lipshutz 1999). Religious NGOs and INGOs can be particularly useful in this regard, as I will describe in greater detail in Chapter Four. In fact, one respondent from my fieldwork described the early 1990s as marking a “new wave of mobilization” of transnational religious networks’ resources in support of United Nations’ programs.<sup>13</sup>

If Gill’s state-focused model of religion-state cooperation is generalizable to the global level of analysis, religious groups’ potential to provide much needed resources and confer legitimacy should afford them greater leverage vis-à-vis international institutions, and probably explains their higher profile in these contexts in recent years. To the extent that international institutions are in the early stages of construction, and therefore in need of material resources, as well external verification of their legitimacy,

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<sup>12</sup> Unless, of course, local groups associate them with unpopular past or present governments (Haynes 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Interview with member of interfaith NGO, September 2000, New York City.

opportunities will open for organizations that can provide such resources to exert claims of a public nature. Because religious groups are common among the organizations that exhibit these characteristics, the construction of secular institutions should actually be associated with an *increase* in transnational religious claims making – a hypothesis that will be specified and tested in the next chapter.

However, the possibility of religion and state reciprocally interacting at the transnational level of analysis raises questions about the cultural autonomy of transnational religion from states whose ideological underpinnings are hegemonic in international institutions. For instance, we know from sociological research on organizations and institutions that “... for organizations to have a legitimate claim on scarce resources, the goals they pursue should be congruent with wider societal values” (Scott 1995: 45; Ruef and Scott 1998). States and other regulatory and standards-setting organizations play an important role in facilitating this cultural alignment between organizations and their wider institutional environments (Ruef and Scott: 877). Within transnational regimes, international institutions perform this standard-setting function (Strang and Chang 1993; Tarrow 2001).

If issues of religious freedom and identity are to be increasingly negotiated beyond states, and subject to the cultural models of “appropriate” religious expression and practice that are assumed in international institutions, we need to consider the possibility that incentives are created for religious groups to conform, or even transform, according to these dominant models. This in turn, raises

questions about how such incentives might variably affect the diverse religious groups competing for voice within the transnational public sphere.

Consider, for example, the relationship of political Islam to the United Nations. It is an explicit requirement for NGOs with consultative status at the UN that they be able to demonstrate “political neutrality.” Although on the surface this seems like a culturally neutral requirement, it actually assumes a historically specific, western model of religion and state differentiation - one that many forms of Islam do not acknowledge. For them, religion is enacted through participation in the world, including politics. By allowing only apolitical forms of Islam accreditation, and therefore representation, in the world polity, other forms are marginalized.

Illustrating another example, Chapter Four will focus on the issue of HIV/AIDS and a debate that ensued at the UN over the explicit mention of homosexuality in a UN Declaration. The explicit mention of homosexuals was controversial because it implied the tacit recognition of homosexuality as a legitimate life choice, and of homosexuals as a category of persons whose human rights require explicit, public articulation. The recognition of homosexuality in these terms creates far less of a problem for liberal religious NGOs than it would for conservative religious NGOs that interpret homosexuality as contrary to their theology. Scholars have yet to systematically explore how such variation in religious NGO resonance with the dominant principles operating in international human rights regimes and institutions is related to the level of influence they can

assert within the field, or, by extension, with the tendency to modify their public discourses and platforms.

These questions about legitimacy bring us to what is perhaps a more latent function of international institutions, and draws out developments in social movement theory that have parallels with research on institutions and legitimacy in organizational analysis. Just as state-building in large part determined the forms of organizing that we associate with modern-day social movements (Tilly 1986), international institutions influence the forms through which non-state actors make claims in global civil society (Tarrow 2001; Imig and Tarrow 2001; Tarrow 2005, Ch. 2). Transnational social movements and advocacy networks do not appear inevitably or automatically as result of globalization. Rather, international institutions play a substantial role in their emergence and formation (Tarrow 2001; Imig and Tarrow 2001; Tarrow 2005, Ch. 2). Tarrow advances the claim that international institutions function as centralized forums through which diverse actors from around the globe can “find one another, gain legitimacy, form collective identities, and go back to their countries empowered with alliances, common programs, and new repertoires of collective action” (Tarrow 2001, p.15). He further goes on to specify mechanisms – modularity, brokerage, mobilization, and certification - through which international institutions facilitate these processes and subsequently shape forms of contentious politics (Tarrow 2001, p.14-15).



In Chapter Five, I explore how one of these mechanisms – certification<sup>14</sup> – shapes the forms through which religious claims are asserted in the international public sphere. I accomplish this through an examination of organizational characteristics that are associated with having consultative status with international institutions. Going beyond Tarrow, this analysis demonstrates how the certification process contributes to stratification among NGOs – in this case religious stratification within the human rights field. I will show how certification is not a culturally or politically neutral process, but one that systematically opens opportunities for some forms of actors, while excluding others. In the case of religious NGOs, differences in power among states intersect with normative interpretations of human rights and religious freedom to influence variation in access to international institutions.

Of relevance to secularization scholars, I argue that the movement of a secular model of religion and state relations to the transnational level of analysis does *not* necessarily constitute a further separation between religious and secular public authority in the global public sphere. Rather, it is equally possible that religious and secular power interact in a continual process of co-development, thus giving advantages to religious groups that have been historically tied to more powerful states. In order to investigate how religion-state linkages operate in transnational politics, it is instructive to examine the

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<sup>14</sup> Following Tarrow, I define certification as “the validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by authorities.” Tarrow goes on to explain that “certification operates as a powerful selective mechanism in contentious politics, because a certifying site always recognizes a limited range of identities, performances and claims” (Tarrow 2004, p. 22).

institutions where transnational religious and secular power meet. International institutions are one such arena.

But to examine how secular institutions influence religious claims making in the global public sphere requires a theoretical framework that explicitly problematizes the issue of culture in and on organizations and institutions. That is, we need a theoretical account of institutions as not only regulating the technical aspects of the global political economy, but as playing an important part in the production of norms, the definition of actors, and the legitimation of practices in global civil society. As emphasized by Barnett and Finnemore:

Global organizations do more than just facilitate cooperation by helping states to overcome market failures, collective action dilemmas, and problems associated with interdependent social choice. They also create actors, specify responsibilities and authority among them, and define the work these actors do, giving it meaning and normative value. Even when they lack material resources, IOs [international organizations] exercise power as they construct the social world (Barnett and Finnemore 2001, p.404).

In sociology, the theoretical perspective that gives greatest priority to role of culture in institutions is sociological institutionalism.

### *Institutionalism and World Politics*

In the social sciences, there are multiple “institutionalisms” that differ from one another in important ways and can be classified along multiple dimensions. The institutionalisms that I discuss below do not constitute a complete survey, but highlight contrasts among institutionalisms that I hope will make clear my decision to engage primarily with the “new institutionalism,” and more specifically “world polity institutionalism” as a framework for understanding the influence of secular institutions on transnational religious claims-making in the public sphere.

To begin by way of contrast, the strand of institutionalism that is furthest removed from the study of culture in institutional analysis is the rational choice framework, which was elaborated by Brinton and Nee in *The New Institutionalism in Sociology* (1998). Also referred to as “economic institutionalism,” this exchange theoretic approach to institutions is most compatible with the “religious economies” model of secularization described earlier in this chapter. From this perspective, both markets and institutions are conceptualized as the aggregate of their parts, those parts being the transactions among individual and organizational actors that rationally pursue their economic interests, with an eye to minimizing costs and maximizing benefits to themselves. Institutions, from this perspective, serve a utilitarian function by decreasing uncertainty and lending a certain level of predictability to markets, thereby lowering the transaction costs involved in exchange relations (North 1984). Applied to the world of international relations, this model theorizes states as the

rational actors that engage in transactions, with regimes and international institutions serving the function of decreasing uncertainty in inter-state political and economic exchange. Their primary function, then, is to lower the transaction costs of engaging in international relations (Young 1986). For economic institutionalists, the exercises of power entailed in the creation of institutions and markets are often treated as given – that is, they are not problematized. Likewise, the sources of and processes through which actors come to define the interests that they pursue are usually beyond the scope of economic institutionalist research.

In contrast, historical institutionalism, also known by the misnomer “old institutionalism,” emphasizes the exercise of power in the creation of markets and the formal institutions that structure them. This perspective is represented in the works of scholars such as Selznick (1949), Keohane (1988), Fligstein (1990) and Roy (1997). Rather than taking markets or institutions for granted, historical institutionalists closely examine the processes through which they are created. They do so with an eye toward the various actors, interests, and values that combine to produce organizations and institutions whose rules systematically favor some types of actors and practices over others. From this perspective, states and international institutions are of considerable importance, not only in their capacity to exert influence over the “rules of the game” but also as instruments that competing actors attempt to wield on behalf of their constituencies. This is not to say, however, that the features of institutions are wholly consistent with the designs of their authors.

Instead, historical institutionalists emphasize the emergent properties of institutions, and their propensity to develop in unintended and unpredictable ways.

Implicit in this concern with the tension between emergence and design is a claim that institutions, once constructed, have the capacity to shape the practices of actors that engage with them. As we move in the direction of new institutionalism, we find an increased emphasis on institutional power as not only the power to make technical rules, but as the power to create meaning. As described by Keohane, “institutions do not merely reflect the preferences and power of the units constituting them; the institutions themselves shape those preferences and that power” (Keohane 1988, p.388, cited in DiMaggio and Powell 1991, p.7). This emphasis on constitutive power adds a new dimension to the notion of autonomous institutional effects (Barnett and Finnemore 2001).

The new institutionalism’s most influential articulation to date appeared in the edited volume by Powell and DiMaggio, titled the *New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (1991). As illustrated by the contributors to that volume, in response to economic institutionalists’ emphasis on rationalism as an essential characteristic of organizational actors, new institutionalists emphasize the variety of ways that culture influences organizational behavior. They describe culture, and the institutions in which cultural assumptions are embedded, as the source of actors’ identities, interests, and the appropriate means for pursuing them - even when those identities, interests and means give the impression of being “rational” (Fligstein

1990; Friedland and Alford 1991, p.240; Meyer and Rowan 1991; Clemens 1997),

There are a variety of ways that institutionalists study the relationship between culture and organizations. While some new institutionalist scholars focus on the need for organizations and institutions to resonate with external environments, others emphasize the routine, cognitive, and taken-for-granted aspects of organizational and institutional behavior that account for such processes as institutional durability. But these differences aside, in contrast to economic institutionalists, new institutionalists all challenge the claim that organizations operate primarily according to criteria of efficiency and profitability, pointing out that institutions persist despite failures to produce efficient, rational or otherwise intended outcomes. Rather, they illustrate how non-rational processes and concerns such as habit, fashion, or legitimacy drive much of organizational behavior (Meyer and Rowan, 1991; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Strang and Soule 1998; Strang and Macy 2001).

Though there is considerable overlap, new and old institutionalists differ in important ways in terms of their emphases. In comparison to old institutionalists, new institutionalists place a greater premium on the cognitive, taken-for-granted aspects of social organization than on vested interests and power. Whereas old institutionalists emphasize how interests negotiated in informal relations subvert the intended functions of formal structures (Selznick 1949), new institutionalists emphasize how attachment to ritual and symbol can preclude rational outcomes (Meyer and Rowan 1991).

While old institutionalists examine embeddedness in terms of ties to local communities, new institutionalists give priority to embeddedness in field-level symbolic and culture systems and shared notions of legitimacy. Old institutionalists provide accounts of action and change; new institutionalists describe enactment and social reproduction.<sup>15</sup> As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, to understand the influence of secular institutions on religious advocacy will require the incorporation of concepts emphasized within both the new and the old institutionalisms.

### *World Polity Institutionalism*

In the chapters that follow, I will engage with a specific branch of the new institutionalism called “world polity institutionalism,” which articulates a framework for understanding how culture influences organizational behavior at the global level of analysis. Rather than assuming economic rationalism to be an essential feature of action in world politics, global institutionalists conceptualize rationalism as a social construct that is enacted through various agents in the world polity, especially INGOs.

Institutionalists locate the origins of rationalist constructs in what they refer to as “world culture” (Meyer et al 1987; Meyer 1991; Meyer et al. 1997; Frank et al. 1999; Boli and Thomas 1999a; Thomas 2001). They define “culture,” and by extension “world culture,” as “a set of fundamental principles and models, mainly ontological and

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<sup>15</sup>For a detailed comparison and discussion of the old and new institutionalisms, see DiMaggio and Powell (1991) or Hirsch and Lounsbury (1997).

cognitive, defining the nature and purposes of social action" (Boli and Thomas 1999). Rationalist world culture and its associated principles are theorized as having an independent, homogenizing influence over organizational forms and behavior in global civil society. They support this claim by examining the structures and processes of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), citing research that identifies structural isomorphism across geographical contexts (for example, Thomas and Lauderdale 1987; Strang 1990; Meyer et al. 1992).

Institutionalists identify five general world cultural principles that are enacted through INGOs. Since these principles are indeed defining features of Human Rights, I will briefly review them here. The first is the principle of *rational voluntaristic authority*, which holds that, "responsible individuals acting collectively through rational procedures can determine cultural rules that are just, equitable and efficient, and that no external authority [such as religion] is required for their legitimation... It is the agency presumed to inhere in rational individuals organizing for purposive action" (Boli and Thomas 1999, p.37). Second, the world cultural principle of *universalism* is illustrated in the rhetorical application of human rights conventions to all persons across all times and places. Likewise, *individualism*, the third principle, is illustrated in the belief that individuals are the natural, sovereign entities to which human rights apply. For example, the right to vote and rights to freedom of association and freedom of conscience are all rights that are assumed to inhere in individuals, not groups such as families or communities.



Fourth, the principle of *world citizenship* implies a shared belief in a common human destiny that transcends territorial boundaries. And, finally, the principle of *rationalizing progress* denotes the belief that these other principles can best be enacted through the calculated application of science, expertise, technology and reason to social problems and issues (Boli and Thomas 1999, p.34-41).

By identifying a coherent cultural system exerting a homogenizing influence at the global level of analysis, world polity institutionalism potentially provides a useful conceptual framework for examining how a hegemonic cultural form influences world polity participation among culturally heterogeneous actors. In its current elaboration, however, it falls short of being adequately suited to this task. The main weakness of the perspective is that its claims about the homogenizing force of world culture are over-determined, leaving little room for the incorporation of the empirical heterogeneity of cultural forms into its sweeping research agenda. Although there are occasional references to the fact that diversity and conflict exist in the world polity (Boli and Thomas 1999, p.18; Thomas 2001), we find little attempt to examine interaction among competing cultural forms, or the factors that determine the resolution of cultural conflicts. We are not given any explanation for why rationalist world culture defeats all challengers or the mechanisms through which competing ideological systems, including religions, remain subordinate to this pervasive, homogenizing force. Neither is there any discussion of competition among “lesser” cultural forms vying for dominance beneath the umbrella of this overarching world cultural framework.

Without a clearly defined framework for addressing heterogeneity and conflict, world polity institutionalism falls short of being able to account for the inconsistency between the secularism of world culture on the one hand and the evidence of widespread religious resurgence in the world polity on the other. However, by taking into account developments in the sociology of religion, and explicitly incorporating some neglected aspects of both the new and old institutionalisms, we could develop a global institutionalist framework that is amenable to the study of religion and world culture. This dissertation will attempt to achieve three modifications intended to move global institutionalism in such a direction.

First, institutionalist accounts of world culture's homogenizing force underestimate the capacity of religion to thrive in highly rationalized environments (Chapter Three). In describing the origins of world culture, and its global integration and coherence, institutionalists adhere to a model of societal transformation that closely resembles Weber's account of Western secularization. On the one hand, institutionalists identify world culture as historically rooted in Christendom. For instance, Meyer describes the "unique structures of Christendom" as "the source of the West's capacity to develop and sustain orderly long-distance linkages beyond its political control system, and to penetrate society with collective meanings, rights, and powers without collapsing in chaotic and segmented power systems" (Meyer 1991, p. 400).

On the other hand, institutionalists ultimately subscribe to a model of a rationalized, secular world polity - one that has been

emancipated from the religious foundations to which Meyer refers. As I will describe in greater detail in the next chapter, institutionalism confronts us with a world culture whose authority not only exists independent of the religious system from which it evolved, but functions as an antagonistic force, steadily usurping religion's influence. This account of the relationship between religion and rationalism stands in contrast to theoretical developments in the sociology of religion (discussed earlier), that challenge the secularization paradigm. The empirical evaluation of these competing claims about the influence of religion in global civil society will require that we relax assumptions about institutional differentiation, and reassess the Weberian model of secularization that world polity institutionalism takes for granted. Chapter Three will accomplish this task by showing that, even in a highly rationalized field like human rights, the influence of public religion is growing.

Second, an institutionalist account of world culture must clearly distinguish between rationalism as a goal or objective, and rationalism as an instrumental means for achieving objectives that may or may not themselves be rational. In an earlier formulation of world polity institutionalism, Meyer and his colleagues claimed to be examining only instrumental rationality (Meyer et al 1987, p. 20), thereby leaving open the possibility that organizations may adopt instrumentally rational means to achieve religiously-inspired ends. Boli (1999), however, in a later account of world polity institutionalism, does not maintain a clear conceptual distinction between means and ends, nor for the matter, does he offer clear

definitions to distinguish between rational and non-rational modes of organizing.

For example, in his discussion of the pervasiveness of rational voluntarism, he states that, “global organizations whose goals or means include something like compassion (world peace, harmony, fellowship, mutual understanding, tolerance) are not at all rare but few of these [INGOs] allow compassion to play a major role in their internal structures or operations. Most are much too rationalized for that” (Boli 1999, p.276-277). Since it is not clear from Boli’s argument what a “compassionate organizational structure,” or “compassionate means,” would look like, we are left to infer that any attempt to organize instrumentally – that is, any attempt to organize – is, by default, evidence of conformity to the rationalist values of the world polity. In effect, we are left with an untestable hypothesis.

Equally problematic is the claim that organizations that explicitly state that their goals are inspired by the desire for compassion, are really just “[incorporating] compassion mainly as a source of motivation for the commitment to rational purposes” (Boli 1999, p.176). In other words, compassionate ends are actually just means for achieving the “real” end, which is organizing according to rational means. In this dissertation, I consider the alternative, and less convoluted, scenario – that rationalism may in fact be an instrumental strategy for the commitment to religious or spiritual purposes.

Chapters Three and Four in particular will add some clarity to the relationship between rationalism and religion, and to the

distinction between means and ends rationalism. First, Chapter Three will examine the prevalence of religious organizing by looking strictly at organizational goals and motivations, and thereby establish religion's primary relevance as a basis for mobilization among religious advocates in Human Rights. Chapter Four will then explore in greater detail the rational, instrumental, means that are used to achieve religiously motivated ends, by not only NGOs, but also states asserting claims in Human Rights. Taken in combination, Chapters Three and Four clarify the distinction between instrumental and values rationalism, and show how "rational" means are part and parcel of religious organizing. Though NGOs at times employ tactical maneuvers that may give the appearance of secularization, these maneuvers do not considerably compromise the religious sensibilities or motivations of the strategists that employ them. In fact, rational means and religious motivations co-exist quite comfortably.

Third, and finally, more explicit attention to the institutionalist concept of decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1991, p.57-58), will be useful for exploring stratification in transnational organizational fields, and will allow for an incorporation of old institutionalist concerns into the study of organizations and world culture. By decoupling, I am referring to the process whereby the formally and officially articulated goals of an organization exist independently of the practices that actually comprise an organization's operations. As explained by Meyer and Rowan (1991, p.58), when decoupling occurs:

The assumption that formal structures are really working is buffered from the inconsistencies and anomalies involved in technical activities... Decoupling enables organizations to maintain standardized, legitimating formal structures while their activities vary in response to practical considerations. The organizations in an industry tend to be similar in formal structure – reflecting their common institutional origins – but may show much diversity in actual practice.

In the case of Human Rights, a disjuncture, or decoupling, exists between the egalitarian myth of world culture on the one hand and stratification within the organizational field on the other. The principles of world culture that find rhetorical expression in Human Rights are principles of equality, universalism, democracy, and a depoliticizing rationality. However, beneath this realm of ostensibly apolitical discourse lies a practical organizational context that is profoundly marked by politics, competition and relationships of dependence among various actors, whether they are states, corporations, or NGOs (Bob 2002; Mendelsohn and Glenn 2002; O'Brien 2000; Uvin 2000). Furthermore, issues of representation and accountability among differentially situated actors are only beginning to be empirically explored (Obrien 2000; Reuben 2002; Tarrow 2001; Uvin 2000). To theorize a direct link between “world culture” and

“organizational forms” without examining the empirical relationships among different types of organizations is to leave unchallenged the assumption that world cultural discourse is coterminous with the organizing principles of global civil society as they are played out in practice.

In terms of religion, we cannot assume that voice in the world polity is enjoyed equally among religious NGOs, especially in light of the unique historical relationship of Christendom to world culture. Through centuries of co-development with Western states, Christendom developed transnational institutional structures that not only comprise some of the oldest and most expansive organizational networks in the world, but “were central factors helping to determine the great distinctive Western, and now world, outcomes” (Meyer 1991, p. 401). The organizations that operate beneath the umbrella of the Christendom not only span a larger transnational territory than do those of other religious traditions, but in the case of Catholicism, are more often embedded in centralized hierarchical structures that allow them to operate more efficiently in both their transnational programs and in their affiliations with international institutions. Within Catholicism, as Della Cava (2001, p. 2) points out, NGOs can draw from a variety of resources, including Catholic universities, seminaries and research centers, highly mobile, well-trained manpower reserves in the form of missionaries, clerical and lay, as well as funding that is channeled through a wide variety of related international relief and charitable agencies. “Additionally, Catholicism is in the unique position among all contemporary world

religions of also having a centralized administration, the Stato della Citta del Vaticano, that is universally recognized as part of a current state-system. As a result, it may at times derive benefits for its ecclesiastical interests by invoking its role as a state” (Della Cava 2001, p. 2).

This stands in contrast, for example, to Islam. Although Islam, like Christianity, has also spread in part through missionary activity, the historical details of its development have culminated in organizational structures characterized by territorial and ideological boundaries. Whereas Christian missions were supported by state-led processes of territorial expansion, much of Islamic identity and interorganizational structure developed alongside the various nationalisms that developed in response to Western colonialism (Lapidus 2001, p.46-48). Ira Lapidus points out, in his discussion of universalistic Islam, that “... while there are numerous [universal] associations that operate for religious purposes, most Islamic political groups are in fact localized in national state contexts ... National states define the boundaries of Muslim identities” (Lapidus 2000, p. 38). As a result, Islam lacks a centralized, international organizational structure comparable to that of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, it lacks a more or less common model of religion-state relations and an internationally centralized authority that is recognized as a legitimate representative of universalistic Islam. Just as these characteristics of transnational Islam present barriers to collective action within western states, (Warner and Wenner 2002, p.5), can hypothesize them to leave Islam at a disadvantage in



competing for resources and institutional access on the formal political terrain of the world polity as well.

This dissertation, especially in Chapters Four and Five, will bring this heterogeneity and conflict to the forefront of institutionalist research on world culture. In the process, it will aim to achieve a conceptual synthesis that strikes a balance between new institutionalism's emphasis on culture and old institutionalism's focus on power, states, and conflict within institutions and organizational fields. I will accomplish this through an empirical analysis how international institutions shape forms of religious claims-making in Human Rights.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### MEASURING RELIGION IN GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

In this chapter, I will suggest methodological innovations that will improve our ability to accurately identify and measure macro-level patterns of religious resurgence and decline. I will begin by showing how, in past and current research, operationalizations of religiosity, even those used in studies that refute the dominant secularization paradigm, usually assume differentiated fields of action, rendering them inadequate for assessing religious involvement in the public sphere. To correct this problem, instead of treating religion as a distinct, differentiated sphere of social life, I examine religion within one organizational field - human rights. By doing so, I relax the assumption of a strict separation between sacred and secular fields of action, revealing the presence of organized religion in an arena that is often assumed to be the domain of secular political engagement.

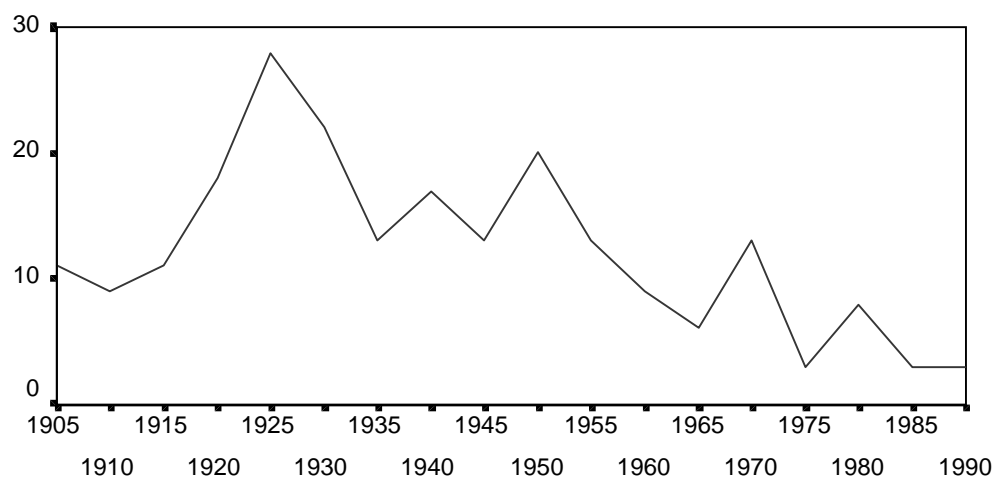
However, rather than taking for granted that religious participation in human rights indicates mobilization based on religious principles or for religious purposes, I will consider the alternative possibility that it is actually a form of secularization, one whose mechanism is the co-optation of religious NGOs' resources for secular purposes. This chapter will begin to assess these competing interpretations of public religious mobilization through the examination of interviews with individuals working for religious human rights NGOs, as they describe the principles and sources of

motivation behind their advocacy. In the process, this chapter will establish the existence of a hierarchy of cultural principles operating across different levels of engagement in human rights, thus setting the stage for a more detailed discussion in Chapter Four about the strategic uses of heterogeneous discourses across contexts.

### *Measurement and Institutional Differentiation*

As stated in Chapter Two, institutionalist's accounts of world culture underestimate the capacity of religion to thrive in highly rationalized environments. This over-determined secularism is reflected in their choice and interpretations of data used to support claims about the content of world culture. Specifically, institutionalism's proponents do not insure that their own methods for measuring the adoption of world cultural principles are independent of the constructed world cultural categories that they describe. This is particularly true of the boundary they assume between religious and secular fields of action, describing the former as "out of step with world cultural principles" (Boli and Thomas 1999, p. 43).

As evidence of religion's incompatibility with world cultural principles, institutionalists use the *Yearbook of International Organizations (YBIO)* to compare INGO foundings in different sectors of activity and observe a relative decline in foundings of organizations in the "religious" field over the past century. Figure 3.1 illustrates the decline in religious organizational foundings to which Boli and Thomas refer.



Source: Yearbook of International Organizations

N=220

Figure 3.1 Foundings of “Religious Organizations” (Organizations Classified as “R” in the YBIO)

Observing this apparent decline, institutionalists claim that “the individualism of world culture works against collectivist forms [including religion] of transnational organizing” (Boli and Thomas 1999, p.43). Their interpretation of the YBIO data conforms to the linear model of progressive institutional differentiation predicted by modernization theory, which posits secularization as a foregone conclusion, with religion (and other “primordial forms”) pitted against world culture in a losing battle for ideological dominance. Thomas (2001, p. 517) offers the most explicit assertion of this sacred-secular antagonism, arguing that “world culture is not neutral vis-à-vis religions even as religions are practiced within it and must engage it. Because it has a diffuse moral nature, world culture competes with religions for providing the moral grounds to public and private life, and thus much conflict takes religious forms.”

Meanwhile, research on the relationship between religion and modernization is increasingly turning up evidence that the two can actually co-exist quite comfortably. Much of the research on Islam, for example, points to the need for a conceptually more fluid approach to the sacred and secular, illustrating how “Islam and modernity are not in contradiction nor do they evolve in opposition but rather they mutually constitute each other” (Yavuz 2001, p. 2). Yavuz, for example, explains how the increase in associational life that occurs with democratization creates opportunities for religious resurgence (Yavuz 2001, p. 4). Bamyeh argues that many Islamic critiques of the West are not aimed at the West’s promotion of modernization, but at the West’s failure to live up to the goals of its own modernization

agenda, with Islam held up as a superior model for achieving those goals (Bamyeh 2002). Adelkhah (2000) describes the association between the theocratization of the Iranian state and the rationalization of the Shi'a Muslim clergy. The positive association between Muslim commitment to Islam and higher education is also well documented (Rudolph 1997, p.30; Hefner 2001, p.494).

And Islam is not simply an exception that proves a rule about religion and modernization. Riesebrodt (1993) demonstrates how the emergence of both American and Iranian fundamentalism were aided by and shaped modern developments in their respective contexts. Rational choice scholars have demonstrated that competition within religious markets is associated with the flourishing of religious life in America and Western Europe (Finke and Stark 1988; Stark and Iannoccone 1994). Research on politics and the Catholic Church has shown that religion-state differentiation actually positions the Church to more effectively take oppositional stances on certain public issues (Smith 1991; Burns 1992; Casanova 2001). And most important, Casanova advances the argument that the coincidence of institutional differentiation and globalization will not result in privatization, but on the contrary, will result in a movement of religious authority to the public sphere of global civil society (Casanova 2001). If these scholars are correct, rather than the marginalization of religion, we should find *increased* religious mobilization accompanying the rationalization of the world polity and the formal institutions around which it rallies.

Unfortunately, however, any such mixing of the sacred and secular or movement of religion to the global public sphere will be difficult to capture in studies that measure religion as a distinct sector of social life. This brings us to the evidence presented by world polity institutionalists: the main problem with their measurement of religious organizing is that it assumes what the authors intend to demonstrate - a secularized public sphere. The problem, in large part, lies in the source of world polity scholars' data – the *Yearbook of International Organizations* – and the inferences they draw from its system of classification.

#### *The Yearbook of International Organizations*

The primary purpose of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (YBIO or *Yearbook*) is the collection of data on international organizations. The *Yearbook's* editors, the Union of International Associations (UIA), have been collecting this information since 1908. Not surprisingly, it is the most complete, and almost the sole, source of information used by scholars who conduct quantitative studies of INGOs. However, use of the YBIO as a source of data for supporting claims about the principles enacted through “world culture” is problematic. I say this for two reasons.

First, there is good reason to believe that the UIA's data collection methods are biased in favor of organizations that embody the world cultural principles identified by institutionalists. After World War I, the Union of International Associations began working in collaboration with the League of Nations and, since the end of

World War II, has worked closely with the United Nations (UIA 2000, p.2419). In fact, the UIA's methodological approach to the selection of organizations for inclusion in the *YBIO* has been officially endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of the UN (UIA 1992, p. 1628). As a result of this collaboration, the UIA's criteria for inclusion in the *YBIO* are at times influenced by the UN's informational needs. For example, in 1978, the *YBIO* revised its classification scheme in order to more accurately reflect the types of organizations that have consultative status with the UN (Pei-heng 1981, p.64).

The UIA's efforts to define INGOs in ways that are consistent with the needs of international institutions have not been motivated solely by the practical advantages of doing so. Norms have also played a role. Consider this excerpt from a memorandum by the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, communicated to the League on September 5, 1921:

The principles and ambitions of the Union of International Associations were consecrated by the formation of the League. The very nature of the work carried out by the Union of International Associations before the war rendered it indirectly and within the means at its disposal, one of the promoters of the League of Nations. It had already expressly declared at one of the congresses that the principle of a League of Nations was the ultimate end of all international movements (UIA 2000, p. 2419).



This close and principled collaboration between the UIA and international institutions suggests the need for caution when using the *YBIO* as a source of evidence for making claims about the content and pervasiveness of world culture. With the UN so thoroughly embodying the world cultural principles described by institutionalists (Chapter Two), any data collection system designed to identify organizations that are legitimate vis-à-vis UN criteria is likely to contain a collection bias in favor of the types of organizations structured according to those world cultural principles. For example, they are more likely to have large, internationally diverse memberships, have egalitarian voting and financial structures, and have universally stated goals that are achieved through the use of technical, scientific, or quasi-scientific methods. In other words, using *YBIO* data to make claims about the proliferation of world cultural principles is akin to sampling on the dependent variable.

My second reason for caution in using the *Yearbook* is more directly related to claims about religion in world culture; it is the classification system used by the UIA. The organizations that meet the institutionally recognized criteria described above, and about which the most detailed information is published, are classified in the *YBIO* as “conventional international” organizations. Institutionalists, by and large, only measure “conventional organizations” in their quantitative studies of INGOs and world culture (Smith 1997; Boli and Thomas 1999, p.20; Frank et al. 1999, p.85; Berkovitch 1999, p. 117). The criteria for inclusion in the *YBIO* as a “conventional international” organization include: membership in three or more

states, non-exclusive membership, equal voting rights for members, and relatively equal financial contributions from members from each state, so that no one state's members dominate the others (Union of International Associations 2002/2003, p.2661-2663).

Religious orders, fraternities and secular institutes, often having hierarchical structures, seldom meet all of these criteria. Therefore, they are classified in a separate category, "R," presumably for "religion," and their *Yearbook* entries are abbreviated to include only the organizations' names and contact information. Note that this classification into a separate category is based the *structure and membership rules of an organization – not primarily on the presence or absence of religious missions or activities*. This means that a number of the human rights INGOs classified as "conventional" in the *YBIO* may in fact be religious, but are not identifiable as such if the determination is made solely on the basis of their *YBIO* classification.

The use by scholars of this separate category to measure the enactment of religious principles in world culture is misleading in that it implies that "religious" and "secular" fields of activity are mutually exclusive, with religious activity confined to the realms of prayer, religious vocation, and otherworldly concerns. All "non-R" or "conventional" activity is assumed to be the exclusive domain of "secular" actors enacting "world cultural" principles.

This sacred-secular distinction is similar to that which is assumed in many of the quantitative studies engaging the secularization debate; they also rely upon indicators of religiosity such as frequency of attendance at worship services, frequency of

prayer, donations to churches, or recruitment to the clergy, that assume a practical and organizational boundary between religious and secular life.<sup>1</sup> These indicators of religiosity are not sensitive to the presence of organized religion in the public sphere of civil society. We cannot know to what extent the political, educational, or even scientific spheres, for example, are domains of religiously principled action if they have been pre-defined as “non-religious,” in contrast to their “religious” counterparts which are classified separately.

One way to obtain a more precise account of religious influence in civil society is to measure religious INGO foundings *within* organizational fields, rather than across them, therefore avoiding the *a priori* assumption that a differentiation between religious and secular spheres exists in practice. To achieve this, I constructed a dataset comprised of human rights organizations founded over the past century, analyzing their mission statements and program descriptions for religious content. In addition, I conducted interviews with the leaders of religion-based human rights organizations. Rather than taking for granted that religious human rights advocacy implies either a tacit acceptance of the secular world cultural principles elaborated in the global human rights regime, or a tacit acceptance of religious principles, I spoke with individuals members of religious human rights NGOs in order to learn from them directly about the principles that inform their activism.

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<sup>1</sup> Warner’s (1993) influential piece on competing paradigms in the sociology of religion provides a useful review of findings of studies engaging the secularization debate, most of which employ measures of religiosity that assumes a strict boundary between religious and secular spheres.

As I described in Chapter Two, through the associated processes of rationalization and structuring of the field around a formal institutional core, the dominant cultural logic in Human Rights has shifted from one based in natural law and religious traditions, to one based in positive law and science. What is more, as discussed in the Introduction, the secular world cultural principles described by institutionalists came to be firmly embedded in human rights discourse in almost ideal-typical form. If the classical secularization paradigm is correct, this type of rationalization within an organizational field should be associated with an exclusion of religion from the global public sphere. Therefore, we should find a relative decline in foundings of religious human rights NGOs beginning just after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with the structuring of the human rights field through the United Nations. Alternatively, if secularization theory's challengers are correct, we should find either no such decline or an increase in transnational religious mobilization around human rights, as transnational religious authority transfers to the realm of global civil society.

*Data and Methods – Organizational Foundings.*

To avoid the confusion caused by the UIA's system of INGO classification, instead of the *YBIO* I used the online *Human Rights Directory* compiled by Human Rights Internet (HRI) as my primary source of information. HRI, which was founded in 1976, is an internet-based organization whose main purpose is the collection and continual updating of information on human rights organizations

worldwide. HRI does not use organizational structure as a criterion for inclusion in its *Directory*. Therefore, even human rights organizations that do not meet the structural criteria for inclusion as a conventional organization in the *YBIO* are included in the HRI dataset. That is, the HRI database includes organizations with hierarchical structures, less than three countries represented in their memberships, or disproportionate voting rights or financial contributions among members, as well as the human rights organizations that are included in the *Yearbook*. Therefore, it is inclusive of, and presents more complete information on, a wider variety of organizational forms than those recognized within the UN system as legitimate NGOs.

HRI also has a search engine that allows users to search for human rights organizations by religious affiliation. Although this feature made it considerably easier to identify religion-based NGOs, I nonetheless checked to insure each organization was indeed religion-based and not, for example, a secular organization promoting religious freedom. For each religion-based organization's entry that I identified, I collected information on the organization's title, mission, membership, activities and leadership. Where possible, information from the database was supplemented with information from the individual organizations' web sites. I included an NGO in the dataset only if it met at least one of the following criteria, which I view as equally important indicators of religiosity:

*A. A mission statement that explicitly identifies a religious doctrine or tradition as the primary ideological framework for participation in human rights.*

For example, The Africa Faith and Justice Network's mission statement reads as follows:

The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) strives to be a meaningful voice for Africa in U.S. public policy. AFJN stresses issues of human rights and social justice that tie directly into Catholic social teaching. AFJN works closely with Catholic missionary congregations and numerous Africa-focused coalitions of all persuasions to advocate for U.S. economic and political policies that will benefit Africa's poor majority, facilitate an end to armed conflict, establish equitable trade and investment with Africa and promote ecologically sound development.

AFJN's support base is primarily built on the Catholic missionary community in the U.S. and in Africa. AFJN is an extension of missionary witness in the difficult yet important arena of U.S. political decisions that affect African people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://afjn.cua.edu/afjn.cfm>.

*B. An agenda that explicitly includes the mobilization of religious persons or groups on behalf of human rights.*

For example, the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia lists among its principal objectives the following:

ACISCA is motivating the Church and Society to develop counterveiling power in the midst of gloom and despair. The task of building a global people's network such as common people's programme for the 21st century should is (sic) one of the perspectives.

ACISCA aims at re-interpreting the meaning of people's movements and struggles to the churches and seeks their full support and cooperation recognizing and reaffirming its faith and commitment.

ACISCA wants to build ecumenical relations with the Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Charismatic Churches and prove that even at the grass root level its ecumenical relationship is deeper and self sustaining.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://216.92.200.162/AsiaHome.html#MEMBERS>

*C. Activities which include evangelism, proselytism, or the explicit promotion of theocracy.*

For example, the Baptist World Alliance's "Who Are We?" web page reads:

The Baptist World Alliance unites Baptists worldwide, leads in evangelism, responds to people in need and defends human rights.<sup>4</sup>

Using these criteria, I identified 591 religion-based human rights organizations.

The other source of data that I used was the *YBIO*. I used the *YBIO* for two purposes. First, I used it as a basis for creating a trend line to illustrate the decline in religious organizational foundings referred to by institutionalists, that is, those organizations that were classified as "R" in the *Yearbook*. Although the *YBIO* does not provide detailed entries for organizations classified as "R," the appendices of the *YBIO* do contain data on numbers of such INGOs founded each year over the past century.

Second, I used the *YBIO* as a supplementary source of information on religious human rights NGOs. Using the 1999-2000 edition, I examined *YBIO* entries classified under "Humanity," searching for human rights NGOs whose entries contained evidence of religious affiliation according to criteria described above.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> available at <http://www.bwanet.org/fellowship/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> The *YBIO*'s classification system as the of the year 2000 did not include a category titled "Human Rights." Rather, human rights organizations were classified under the category "Humanity."



## *Results*

Overall, my data collection through the use of *HRI* yielded 591 religion-based human rights organizations. One hundred sixteen of those organizations were listed in the *YBIO* as well as *HRI*. In order to provide for a meaningful comparison with Boli and Thomas' findings on religious NGOs, which only include INGOs with or more countries represented within their memberships, not all of the NGOs listed in the *HRI* Directory are used in the analysis that I present in this chapter. In particular, I only include international organizations with three or more countries represented among their members and exclude human rights organizations that are strictly national or bilateral in structure.<sup>6</sup> I also exclude cases for which information on these variables was missing. Only 196, or 33.2% of the religious human rights organizations in the dataset are international. Three hundred forty-one (57.7%) of the organizations in the dataset are either national or bilateral. Information on this variable was missing for 54 (9.1%) of the cases. This dramatic difference between data sources in terms of the numbers of religious NGOs listed is reflective of the *YBIO* selection bias, mentioned above, in favor of larger organizations with universal goals and/or membership. These figures alone give us some insight as to the amount of information that is unaccounted for in research that makes empirical claims about global civil society based solely on the *YBIO* data. Hence, my decision to

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<sup>6</sup> For the results of an analysis that included national and bilateral as well as international NGOs, contact the author.

use the HRI data for my remaining quantitative analyses.

Figure 3.2 compares the foundings of “religious organizations” identified by the Boli and Thomas (the descending grey line,  $n = 220$ ) with the religion-based human rights organizations identified in this study (the ascending black line,  $n = 196$ ). The ascending black line represents currently active human rights organizations that are, in fact, religious according to the criteria defined above. That is, they are religious INGOs whose primary focus is on what world culture presumably defines as a secular social issue, i.e. human rights.

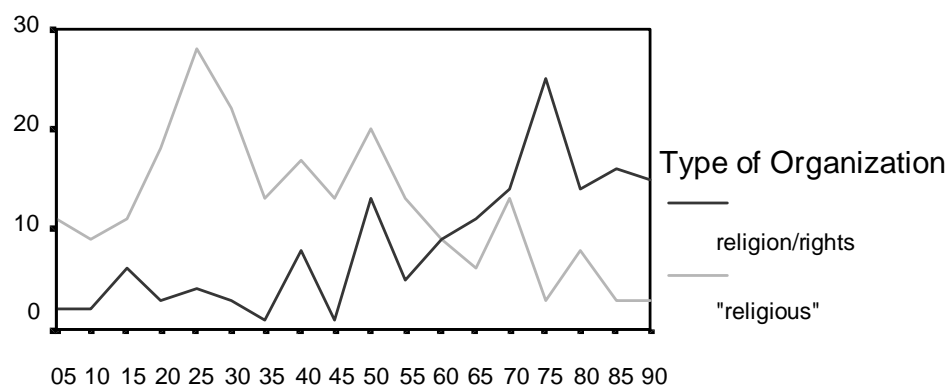
As the figure reveals, although foundings of *YBIO*-defined “religious organizations” have declined over the past century, transnational religious participation in human rights has steadily increased over the same period. The most dramatic increase begins around 1955 and continues during the two decades following the establishment of the United Nations – that is, during a period of marked rationalization within the human rights field, entailing in part the institutionalization of secular “world cultural principles.” Foundings dropped somewhat between 1975 and 1980, but appear to have held steady since then, with approximately 15-17 INGO foundings during every five-year period until 1990. Figure 3.2 illustrates quite a profound shift in religious INGO orientation, especially when we consider the fact that the ascending line only represents foundings in one sector of political activity.

If secularization is defined as a retreat of religion from the public sphere, and a differentiation between religious and secular fields of action, then the comparison reveals that the apparent decline

in the number of “religious organizations” reported by Boli and Thomas is *not* evidence of secularization. Rather, the decline is associated with a population-level shift away from differentiated modes of organization, and toward organizational missions that place religious NGOs squarely within the public sphere of global civil society.

This shift raises the question, however, about whether the movement of religious groups into secular domains might itself be an indicator of secularization, insofar as it might indicate that religious organizations have abandoned their spiritual missions and adopted agendas prescribed through the ideologies of enlightenment rationality, perhaps through strategic choice, co-optation, or an unintentional drift toward secularism (see, for example, Voye 2000). It would follow then, that in function and form, religious organizations cease to be “religious.”

Although this is a reasonable argument, in the field of human rights, it is difficult to sustain. To define human rights activism *a priori* as a secular practice is to impose an interpretation on it that is not shared by the activists themselves. Previous research shows that religious groups working with the United Nations do not for the most part adopt the UN's ideological premises. On the contrary, a study of international, U.S. - based, religious organizations revealed that:



Sources: Yearbook of International Organizations  
and Human Rights Internet

Figure 3.2 Foundings: “Religious” Organizations vs. Religious Human rights Organizations, 1905-1990

Although most religious organizations view the United Nations as legitimate, none thinks of it as the source of authority for human rights. Each organization appeals rather to its own highest authority, finds human rights to be supported or required by that authority, and then concludes - more or less systematically - that the international covenants adequately express its human rights commitment and that the United Nations is the appropriate agency to monitor the fulfillment of those rights" (Livezey 1989, p.76-77).

To determine whether or not Livezey's findings pertain to U.S.-based religious organizations were generalizable among transnational NGOs, and to interpret the meaning of the organizational foundings discussed above, we can refer to the interviews that I conducted with transnational religious INGO advocates.

#### *Data and Methods – Interviews.*

My fieldwork was exploratory, and was conducted at the very beginning of my project, prior to the construction of my quantitative dataset. My questions were motivated toward acquiring a global view of the terrain of Human Rights and the place of religion in it. I was not aiming to produce a "thick description" of the cultural aspects of religious activism, but a general understanding of how the institutions of the human rights field operate with reference to NGOs, and if the "rules of the game" posed any special opportunities or challenges for

religious organizations. With these aims, and my limited budget, in mind, I chose to conduct a small number of in-depth, key-informant interviews with general secretaries, treasurers, founding members and other leaders of well-established transnational religious human rights organizations. Since my budget and associated time constraints would not permit me to travel the entire world, I had to make decisions about the regions upon which I would focus. I chose the eastern United States, including Washington DC and New York City, Canada, and Western Europe. I chose these regions for two reasons. First, my language competencies are in English and (just barely) French. Second, these regions are homes to the United Nations and the European Commission. As a result, they are also the locations where many of the major human rights organizations have established their secretariats.

Since I planned my fieldwork at the beginning of my research, I was not yet aware of the problems with the *Yearbook of International Organizations* that I described above. Therefore, since use of the *YBIO* is somewhat of an established practice among global civil society scholars, I consulted it as my source of information on where to find religion-based human rights NGOs.<sup>7</sup> This is important to note in that my use of the *YBIO*, along with my choice in regions, biases my findings toward the information given by very large, resource rich NGOs that have affiliation with international institutions and other

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<sup>7</sup> It was during the course of my fieldwork that I began to discover the limits of using the *YBIO*, as several of the religious NGOs that my respondents referred to were not listed in it. While working with the *YBIO* at a later date, it became clear that the “missing” NGOs often did not meet the *YBIO*’s criteria of a “conventional” organization. It was also through my preliminary fieldwork that I learned of *Human Rights Internet*.

major organizations in the human rights field. In other words, my respondents are very familiar and practiced in the “spiel,” as well as politics and legalities, of the field. The voices of numerous smaller NGOs, in many cases struggling to survive, are not here represented.

At the time when I was planning my fieldwork, the most recently published *Yearbook* was the 1998 edition. That edition did not have a category specifically titled “Human Rights.” Instead, human rights organizations were classified, along with certain other types of organizations, under a category titled “Humanity.” After searching among the organizations classified under “Humanity” I was able to identify only 35 western INGOs that appeared, from their *YBIO* entries, to be religion based.<sup>8</sup> I sent letters to all of them, describing the purpose of my research and requesting an interview that I estimated to be one hour in duration (see appendix A).

Five of the organizations to which I sent letters turned out to not be substantially focused on human rights. Instead, they focused predominantly on such issues and peace and nuclear nonproliferation, abortion, or on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Three of the organizations were located in inconvenient locations outside of my

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<sup>8</sup> Months later, when I had finished my fieldwork and was beginning to construct my dataset, I contacted the UIA, explained my project and asked how I might get additional information on organizations classified as “R.” In response, one of their editors sent me a list of 80 religion-based human rights INGOs in their database. Why had I not been able to identify these religion-based INGOs on my own? First, at least 11 of them were located in either Asia, Latin America or Africa, so they were outside of my chosen research sites. Second, 54 of them were not classified as “conventional” organizations, and therefore did not have complete entries. Many of those without complete entries had names like “Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations” or “St. Joan’s International Alliance” and, without more information, it was not apparent that they were human rights organizations. Third, even among organizations classified as conventional, the organizations’ religious affiliations were not always obvious. With names like “Youth for Exchange and Understanding” “Right Sharing of World Resources,” and “Pan European Union,” I had assumed many of them to be secular organizations. This issue of “hidden religion” will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

research sites, including Cyprus and Lebanon. There were five organizations from which I received no response, in spite of follow-up letters that I sent through Email three weeks after the initial letters had been sent out. From an additional three organizations, I received an initial response, but could not arrive at a commitment for interviews, as my requests were repeatedly reported to have been “passed on to other members of the organization” and the like.

In the end, I conducted a total of 24 interviews with general secretaries, treasurers, program directors and individuals in other leadership positions across 18 human rights organizations. Two Muslim, one Bahá’ái, one Sikh, three Jewish, four Catholic, three Protestant, one Secular Humanist, and two interfaith organizations were included among those that I interviewed. Although most of them had affiliation with international institutions, one organization had repeatedly been denied consultative status with the UN and another had recently had its UN consultative status revoked.

The interviews were conducted either in the INGOs’ offices or in nearby coffee shops and cafeterias. After turning the tape recorder on, I briefly re-explained the purpose of the interview, recorded the name and title of the respondent and asked her or his permission for the interview to be recorded. The small, hand-held recorder was placed in the middle of the table.

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured. They focused on three general themes relevant to this and other chapters in the dissertation. The questions that were relevant to this chapter were largely contained in the first set of questions. These questions were



about the advantages and disadvantages of religious affiliation in terms of the ability to attract members and supporters, perceived legitimacy vis-à-vis secular institutions, legitimacy vis-à-vis general publics, and alliance formation with other human rights organizations. This segment of the interview also included questions about the use of explicitly religious language by organizations' spokespersons across varying contexts (e.g. local group meeting vs. meeting at UN or EU) and the extent to which inter-religious differences are topics of discussion in ecumenical and interfaith meetings and organizations.

In spite of the rather clinical nature of my questions, respondents often gave clues as to how important religion was to them personally or for the organization's members. For example, one of my respondents expressed disappointment upon discovering the types of questions I wanted to ask, saying he had really hoped he would have more time to talk about his personal story and the role that religion played in bringing him to human rights activism.

### *Findings*

My own research corroborates Livezey's findings on U.S.-based human rights NGOs mentioned above (p. 63). During the course of my fieldwork, advocates described their human rights activism as mainly rooted within their religious convictions. In fact, activists not only identified their religious traditions as the primary ideological frameworks through which they interpret their human rights activism, but frequently legitimated this identification with assertions that the doctrines of their religious traditions espoused human rights principles

long before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights came into existence. Consider the following conversation with a Muslim human rights activist:

Interviewer: Could you explain your organization's definition of human rights or what you would consider to be within the realm of human of rights issues?

Respondent: The basic concept of human rights - I don't think there is any difference in defining what the rights are – but our definition is slightly different from the UN Universal Declaration. We actually have got a bit of a problem calling that universal because I don't think universally everyone got together to come up with it, so I don't see how it becomes universal. Basically, we share most things, except on some areas we actually feel that there are certain rights which have not been established in the UN Charter.

After this activist described some of the issues that he felt the UN Charter fails to address, I asked him the following:

Interviewer: You had mentioned that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights isn't all that Universal. Where would you say your organization's definition originates?

Respondent: Our sort of basis goes back to Islamic basis. The human rights Universal Declaration only chases history for fifty odd years. Ours actually goes much further than that. I mean the Islamic principles evolved while the West was still not allowing women to have the rights of property. And Islamically, all those issues were already established. Those rights were well established within Islamic Law. And, you know, the issues of you know even standing against injustice is extremely inherent in the Islamic teaching and jurisprudence. There are many verses in the Koran that actually deal with struggle for sake of those who are oppressed. One particular verse - it says “How can you not fight in the struggle for the sake of those oppressed men, women and children who are crying and who are saying, ‘God send us a Helper. God, send us a protector.’?” And that verse ... calls upon the believer to rise up in the struggle for the sake of them because they are oppressed.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, Sikh activists were eager to describe their basis for human rights in their own religious tradition. For example, when I opened one interview by asking for a “crash course on Sikhism,” explaining that I knew very little about the religion, the first thing one activist told me was the following:

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<sup>9</sup> Telephone interview with Chairperson of Islamic human rights NGO, December 2001.

Essentially, it's a 500 year old religion which is relatively young on the international scale. However, the scripture itself reads like the UN Declaration on Human Rights. So, it's way ahead of its time – it enshrined the rights of women in scripture long before the rights of women were considered, it's against caste hierarchies, which is the predominant Hindu practice.... The whole religion is essentially based on social justice, okay?

...we look at human rights across the board, for everybody. It's part of our faith to do that. To defend the rights of the downtrodden.<sup>10</sup>

But activists did not only make references to religious doctrine. Some activists also emphasized a human rights orientation as an inherent component of the general practices that are part of their commitment to a faith tradition.

Respondent: We're not really an NGO like, I don't know, Amnesty, although we work very well together.

Interviewer: What are the differences? Are there differences in function?

Respondent: No, I don't think there are differences in

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with spokesperson for Sikh NGO. September 2000, Ottawa.

function, but there is a difference, because Amnesty is not a faith. I mean people who are members of the Bahá'í faith in a way automatically are a member of the NGO.

Interviewer: Even if they don't formally contribute to it?

Respondent: Absolutely. Because they do, because they contribute in a way because they contribute anyway.

Because the goals are the same, so they might not really realize it. You see? So it's not a membership thing.

Clearly, the Bahá'í faith and therefore [our organization] had decided to contribute to the work of the UN because it's very much in line with *our* principles, so we feel we can contribute to the work of the UN.<sup>11</sup>

Membership in an NGO's religious group was also revealed to be an important signal of legitimacy for some of the minority religious NGOs, as was reflected in prohibitions against financial support from non-adherents. Consider, for example, this Bahá'í activist's description of the difference between her organization and Amnesty International upon my asking how this particular NGO funded itself in the absence of a dues-paying membership:

Respondent: Through the international funds of the Bahá'í faith. You see, that's the difference. That's where we

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with minority religious NGO activist, October 6, 2000, Geneva.

work, for example, as a faith. We abide by the principles of our faith which is that a contribution cannot be received by anybody who is not a Bahá'í.

Interviewer: So, all of your contributions do come from Bahá'í s?...

Respondent: Yes, that is a principle of our faith.<sup>12</sup>

It also became clear from my interviews that, in terms of expressive styles, religion does not take a back seat to secularism when it comes to human rights activism within religious NGOs. Consider, for example, this Christian activist's comparison of his own expressive style and orientation toward human rights to that of other Christian activists in his NGO:

Respondent: ... So, I see the [NGO's] movement as being very "faith filled" in the sense that there are lots of people who use a lot of God language and they're kind of Christocentric and they understand that the ministry and the resurrection of Jesus is kind of normative for their lives and drives a lot of their human rights issues....

But when we have like sort of organization-wide meetings, we have lots of – people pray and ... they're not ashamed of their kind of faith background. And someone

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

like [anonymous], who is the president in [anonymous], he is very faith-filled in a somewhat traditional sense. He uses Christ language, he prays... I find it very moving, but it's not entirely my language. But I love the fact that people can express their faith as the core of their human rights condition. I think that's a really good thing.

When I asked how his own orientation toward human rights was different from the "Christocentric" approach that he described, the activist made a distinction between official religion and religion as informing his day to day practice. But the centrality of religion to his activism was nonetheless maintained. He stated:

Respondent: Well, for me, I mean I'm a church heavy guy, but I'm not necessarily in church to worship the conventional Catholic liturgy every day. I'm there to meet the neighbors, to talk to kids, to work in the pantry, to explore options for AIDS ministry, to sit with neighbors. I have to touch it in order to feel whole in my day.....most of what goes on the world I don't particularly like, and the only way that I can function intentionally, and happily and freely is to take all of my values and put them into play... I couldn't do that work without my neighbors in my church.

The respondent later went on to describe more about how belief in God motivates his human rights activism, again through a contrast to more “Christocentric” approaches:

R: I think that there are a few people – there are many people in the [NGO] – would make the case that ... freedom from abuse and torture and degrading treatment is part of their ministry as Christians who have been called to fulfill that ministry. That’s not how I feel personally. I’m not uncomfortable with that language, but for me, it’s much more that ..... if there is a God, a lot of this is intolerable to me. It’s just intolerable. It calls to me that – it’s intolerable to me that my friend died in his early 40s, and it’s intolerable to me that the stress and toll of this work has been taking on people that I love. It’s intolerable to me that all these people were killed in Kosovo and we bombed the shit of them and made 2 million of them refugees and they still have no place to go. It’s intolerable to me that - It just is - it’s like I’m not being argum-, one of those lefties kind of crazies, I mean I just look around and know deep in my gut that there is no fucking way that any of this should be happening in a world for people who say they believe in some higher power. There’s no way. There’s no way.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with member of Christian NGO. New York City, June 2000.



Unlike the decreed fate of Weber's Protestant ethic, the spirit that brought the human rights movement into existence has thus far survived - in spite of its embeddedness within the rational, bureaucratic organizations and institutions that it helped to create. Rather than having to choose between secular world cultural and religious principles, activists interpret human rights in terms of multiple worldviews. As sociologists of culture and social movements have pointed out, individuals can draw from any number of transposable “schema” (Edgell 2002; Sewell 1992) or “frames” (Johnston and Klandermans 1995) in order to interpret action, and this certainly holds true for human rights.

On the one hand, religious organizations engage with international institutions and make use of rationalist tools such as positive law, bureaucratic management or other rationalist strategies that I will describe Chapter Four. But even then, they may use these tools to defend distinctly religious interests, such as the right to evangelize or to protect minority religions (Livezey 1989; Voye 1999; Lerner 2000). Both collectivist and individualist forms of religious freedom are defended through legal-rational argumentation, the presentation of scientific evidence and public appeals to world cultural principles such as universalism and individualism.

At the same time, individuals within human rights organizations may interpret human rights, as well as certain world cultural principles, as rooted in their religious traditions. Religious activists engage in various combinations of worship, scriptural study, evangelism and *human rights activism as a form of religious practice*.

That is, religious activists do not see participation in human rights as peripheral to, or as “watering down,” their faith. Rather, human rights activism is an expression of their faith, a way of “doing religion” in global civil society.

This is not to argue, however, that secularization has not occurred in any way in the human rights field. The fact remains that the ideological framework that now defines the field as a whole, unlike the Christian framework that defined its origins, fully manifests the world cultural principles elaborated by Boli and Thomas, and has a distinctly secular tone. Although this shift in discourse has not prevented growth in the population of religious human rights organizations, the disjuncture between the religious principles operating at the organizational level of analysis and the almost exclusively secular principles consistently described within global civil society research needs to be addressed.

It is my contention that claims about hegemonic world cultural forms, though they accurately describe official discourses such as those elaborated in Human Rights declarations and conventions, may or may not serve as the ideological compass for the culturally diverse actors operating within organizations fields. To adequately comprehend the complexity and conflict inherent in the construction of world culture, we need to look beyond these official discourses and consider the heterogeneity of cultural forms that mingle and compete within and across organizational fields. As Hefner (2001, p. 499), in a discussion of civil Islam, reminds us:

Viewed from the ground of everyday practice rather than the dizzying heights of official canons ... in all societies there are values and practices that hover closer to the ground than official discourse and carry latent possibilities, some of which may have egalitarian or democratic dimensions.

These low-lying precedents may not be heard it high-flying cultural canons. Nonetheless ... these messages are in some sense 'available' to those seeking guidance on what to become when the world takes a new turn.

At the same time, lending support to Steve Bruce's argument that diversity itself creates the conditions for certain forms of secularism (Bruce 1999), the pluralism that we find in the centralized contexts of international institutions creates the conditions for homogenization (e.g. secularization) of discourse. For instance, to avoid ideological controversy, negotiations among states within the UN have typically been characterized by avoidance of specific references to religion (Lerner 2000, p. 119). Such avoidance does not occur out of any blatant disregard for religious viewpoints, but out of an interest in avoiding conflict. When asked if religious differences were discussed openly at UN meetings, one individual that I spoke with during the course of my field research responded that "religion is everywhere" but the issue "is far too explosive. We'd never get through a meeting!" It is precisely because religious differences carry so much meaning in global civil society that explicit references to it are often avoided – not because of any decrease in religion's relevance

to the issues or actors at hand.

In the next chapter, I will turn in detail to the conflicts that emerge as a result of the cultural heterogeneity in the human rights field. First, I will examine the opportunities and challenges that religious NGOs confront through their engagement with secular actors and institutions in human rights. In particular, I will uncover the strategies and tactics that NGO members use to negotiate between their religious commitments and need to maintain legitimacy within a field that is, at least in terms of official culture, secular. Chapter Four will also introduce the issue of inter-religious conflict, and begin to examine the religious stratification among NGOs, a topic that will be covered in even greater detail in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN HUMAN RIGHTS

Chapter Three established that foundings of religious human rights NGOs increased over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that the organization of the field around international institutions opened opportunities for religious mobilization. This finding raises questions, however, about whether any conflicts emerge as a result of the need for religious NGOs to simultaneously maintain legitimacy vis-à-vis the secular field of human rights on the one hand, and their religious membership bases on the other. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that international institutions open opportunities equally for all religious groups, raising a second set of questions, about interorganizational competition and the potential for the formation of alliances and cleavages among religious and secular groups.

This chapter will examine cultural heterogeneity, cooperation and conflict in human rights, and the strategies and tactics that religious actors, including NGOs and states, use to negotiate the pluralist, secular terrain of this transnational field. By “conflict” I am not necessarily, or even usually, referring to outright hostility among actors. Rather, I am usually referring to the fact that, in spite of the many objectives that human rights NGOs share in common, they operate in a field where resources are finite. As a result, even organizations addressing similar issues from compatible perspectives compete for funding, members, contracts, and recognition, creating a

situation of interorganizational conflict. In addition, Human Rights is the site of more explicit conflicts over diverse and competitive program objectives and activities. These more overtly contentious types of conflict occur among states as well as NGOs. Both types of conflict are of concern in this chapter, which will address the following questions:

- First, how do the secular norms and assumptions of Human Rights influence the ability of religious groups to mobilize in ways that are consistent with their traditions?
- Second, how does the influence of Human Rights norms and assumptions vary across religious traditions?
- Third, how does religious affiliation influence opportunities for alliance formation on the one hand, and contribute to inter-group conflict on the other?
- Fourth, what strategies and tactics do religious organizations use to establish credibility among the secular actors and institutions in Human Rights while maintaining legitimacy among their religious membership bases?

To answer these questions, I refer to two sources of data. The first source consists of interviews that I conducted with leaders of religious human rights NGOs, described in the second methods section

of Chapter Three. The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured and focused on two sets of questions relevant to this chapter. The first set focused on NGO leaders' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of religious affiliation in terms of the recruitment of activists, legitimacy vis-à-vis secular institutions and general publics, fund raising, and alliance formation with other human rights organizations. The second set of questions focused on the use and acceptability of explicitly religious language in Human Rights and the extent to which inter-religious differences are discussed openly across contexts. The purpose of the interviews was to get an idea of how both conflicts and alliance formation play out within the NGO universe from the perspective of religious NGO advocates.

But no discussion of religious relations in human rights would be complete without taking into account power and politics, both within and among states. International political and economic relations become particularly important to NGO viability when state sovereignty claims collide with human rights claims. For instance, no one denies that the exclusion of the Dalai Lama from the Millennium Peace Summit was the result of China's international economic importance. Likewise, Sikh activists that have been denied ECOSOC consultative status have consistently claimed that their exclusion is due to a combination of India's international economic importance and Sikh minority claims to self determination within that country. In fact, the issue of state sovereignty repeatedly emerges in the fields of human rights and humanitarian assistance as southern states raise concerns about perceived northern NGO biases. Southern

governments have often accused northern transnational NGOs of being Trojan horses that carry not only western values, including Christianity, but program objectives favoring northern states' economic interests (The Economist, 2000). From this perspective, support for NGOs or national groups that challenge governments' policies are viewed as illegitimate intrusions into internal affairs of state.

To understand how religion intersects with conflicts over western values and sovereignty claims, the second source of data that I analyze consists of United Nations documents pertaining to the negotiations over the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Debates that ensued over the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS bring to the surface important cultural differences among states that are rooted not only in religion, but also in differences in the constitutional relationships between religion and state. As will become clear throughout this chapter, the dominant position within the UN acknowledges freedom of sexual orientation as a human right. Furthermore, protection of that right is discursively constructed as essential to the identification and treatment of HIV/AIDS victims. These assertions conflict with the values held in many of the Muslim countries, which adhere to an interpretation of Islam that define homosexuality as a sin. Furthermore, since many of these countries are theocracies, homosexuality is not only a sin, but also a crime against the state. As a result the conflicts over homosexuality that were hotly debated during the Special Session providing a window



into the intersection between state and religious conflict in Human Rights.

The documents that I used for this portion of the analysis include 13 UN press releases (released between February 1, 2001 and June 22, 2001), transcripts of 27 UN press briefings (delivered Between May 2, 2001 and June 27, 2001), 10 independent press reports given between July 20 and June 21, and the complete transcript from the proceedings of United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, which was held June 25-27, 2001. I also referred to a variety of supporting documents, including the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations “Reference Document” on civil society participation at UN conferences and special sessions, the “Action Guide” for the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and similar types of documents that were referenced throughout the special session.

### *Cultural Conflict and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*

The Special Session on HIV/AIDS was a site of conflict over two controversial issues that will be discussed in this chapter. The first issue was NGO participation – specifically the participation of an NGO called the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. During the months prior to the convening of the Special Session, eleven states raised objections to this NGO’s participation in the Session, culminating its removal from the list of participants. Debates over the NGO’s participation status ensued during the

negotiations prior to and on the first day of the Special Session. What was interesting about the debate in the General Assembly was that neither religion nor homosexuality was mentioned by the Islamic states that opposed the NGO's participation. Rather, the conflict played out on strictly procedural grounds.

A second controversy that emerged was over language used in the draft document of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Specifically, the draft Declaration that was presented for negotiation prior to the conference made explicit references to "men who have sex with men, sex workers and their partners, and injecting drug users and their sex partners."<sup>1</sup> By the end of the 3-day session, the document had been revised in subtle ways. Rather than directly naming these vulnerable *groups*, the document referred to *behaviors* that increase vulnerability, including "risky and unsafe sexual behavior and injecting drug use."<sup>2</sup> The phrase "men who have sex with men," was no longer present in the document and was subsumed under more ambiguous phrase "vulnerable groups;" the reference to sex workers was rephrased as "all types of sexual exploitation of women, girls and boys, including for commercial purposes."<sup>3</sup>

The changes in wording, though barely perceptible to the casual, disinterested observer, were the culmination of heated debates that involved objections raised by certain members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Vatican, and the United States

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch. June 20, 2001. "UN: AIDS Conference Whitewash: US, Vatican, Egypt Undermining Frank Language in Conference. Article extracted from Global Policy Forum, <http://www.igc.org/globalpolicy>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*, United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 25-17, 2001. Pg. 26, paragraph 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Pg. 27, paragraph 63.

(under the leadership of the Bush Administration).<sup>4</sup> Arguments both for and against the inclusion of the more explicit language were made during the General Assembly Special Session, as well as during the informal negotiations over the document.

Through a close reading of the press releases, briefings and Session transcripts pertaining to these two conflicts, I will show two things. First, I will show how the Special Session participants and observers (e.g. the press) make distinctions about discourse that define it as either “value-laden” and “cultural” on the one hand, or “factual” and “based in reality” on the other. In particular, claims made by religious organizations are vulnerable to being discredited as culturally determined, and therefore uninformed, while secular claims are more readily awarded the status of objectivity. I will show that, when speakers’ claims are evaluated as falling into one of these two categories, the evaluations are based less on the actual content of speakers’ claims, and more on the status of the party making them.

Second, I will argue that the use of rationalist modes of argumentation to achieve religiously motivated ends, as I will show to be the case with the procedural debate over the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, is no accident. Rather, it is a common strategy that religious actors use to negotiate a secular organizational field, particularly when religious viewpoints that run contrary to the objectives of the secularist mainstream are discredited on the basis of their being religious. The need for this strategy varies,

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<sup>4</sup> Bosely, Sarah. June 28, 2001. “US-Islamic Alliance Hits Aids Hopes.” *Guardian*. Article extracted from Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org>. .

however, according to whether religious groups espouse viewpoints in support of mainstream agendas or in opposition to them.

When religion emerges as issue of potential conflict in Human Rights, religious groups use this rationalist strategy by combining two tactics that I will introduce in this chapter: discursive secularization and procedural rationalism.

*Discursive secularization.* One way to negotiate across culturally diverse venues is to strategically shift among secular and religious discourses. For example, religious beliefs or identities that are central to an organization's mission or objectives may be emphasized in the recruitment of members, but de-emphasized in communications to the public or in appeals for support from secular organizations and institutions. Related to this, religious persons, groups or issues may be of central importance in the drafting of formal statements and documents, even when those statements or documents carry no obvious trace of religious conviction when presented "on the floor" of international institutions or in other public forums.

*Procedural rationalism.* Two forms of procedural rationalism are illustrated in this chapter. First, I will show how NGO participation in international institutions is a multi-tiered, mutli-stage process that provides many points of access and influence. Human Rights negotiations do not occur in singular forums where all interested parties openly and equally come together to hash out their differences. Rather, even a four-minute statement presented before the Economic

and Social Council (ECOSOC) is often the culmination of multiple meetings of preparatory committees and working groups, not to mention the corridor and cafeteria conversations that precede or accompany the meetings where documents are drafted. As a result, religious groups often make arguments and shape statements in the earlier stages of the claims-making process, which are less structured, more open to debate, and less public than actual conference and special sessions. Second, religious groups use procedural rationalism by challenging controversial proposals and platforms on procedural grounds, or by exploiting certain procedural ground rules, rather than by attacking the actual substance or values underlying the programs that run contrary to their preferences. Both types of procedural rationalism work by creating space for religious groups to exert influence in the grievance process without religious motivations or identities being held to public scrutiny.

Implicit in these strategies is a type of conflict, or least a diversity of opinion, that has not, until recently, been confronted openly in international institutions. However, many of the activists that I spoke with expressed the view that this is beginning to change and that religious differences are starting to make their way to the surface of public debate. The remainder of this chapter will explore religious-secular interaction during this period of institutional change, and the way that religious difference is negotiated in a secular field where religion is still a somewhat taboo subject.

*Culture, Coalitions and Cleavages*

Transnational religion and international relations combine in the field of Human Rights in ways that bring to light the contested nature of human rights norms. This has especially been the case as a broader plurality of actors associated with the UN has begun to assert diverse interpretations of various human rights concepts, such as those pertaining to social and cultural rights. In a conversation about possible reasons for the increased visibility of religion at the UN and the gradual (though still marginal) inclusion of religious language in UN-related texts since the 1990s, one NGO advocate suggested:

I think that it is just about time... People are starting to speak up for themselves. Precisely those people who have not been listened to. Like in Africa, like in Latin America, like in Asia, where people have a much stronger and richer spiritual life. Finally, they are making their voices heard a little bit more. And you have to take into consideration that the UN is the UN of everybody and not just the UN of a few secular states.<sup>5</sup>

With this increased diversity, of course, comes the potential for conflict. And although conflicts have emerged in Human Rights, by and large they have not been conflicts between NGOs of differing religious traditions. In fact, more often than not, NGO leaders

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with minority religious NGO activist, October 6, 2000, Geneva.

reported that, even among NGOs of radically different traditions, religion serves as a basis for cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, cleavages occur in more varied and interesting ways. For instance, conflicts that are simultaneously transcultural and intra-religious have been of tremendous importance in recent years. These conflicts have almost invariably been over issues having to do with women, sexuality and/or reproductive freedom, with family planning and AIDS most frequently in the spotlight. Usually breaking down across “liberal” and “conservative” lines (by current American definitions), the alliances formed around these cleavages are internally quite diverse, cutting across religious and national identities, while creating cleavages within religions and countries. In other words, the same issues that create *intra*-religious conflicts can serve as the basis for powerful *inter*-religious alliances. On the conservative side, for example, it is common to find states and NGOs from the global north and south working hand in hand along with conservative American evangelicals, the Vatican, and Islamic NGOs and states. The same diversity is found in coalitions on the left. At least in the organizational field of Human Rights, transnational conflict looks less like Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* and far more like James Davidson Hunter’s *Culture Wars*.

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<sup>6</sup>My contact with each respondent was usually the duration of one interview. As a result, it cannot be assumed that we developed the type of trusting relationship needed for full disclosure regarding sensitive issues. Inter-religious conflict in human rights is one such sensitive topic, especially at the UN. Therefore, it is not clear whether or not the lack of discussion of inter-religious conflict accurately reflects NGO leaders’ perceptions of the state of relations among NGOs, or if reports of inter-religious harmony were part of the “face” that religious human rights NGOs strategically present to the public. As will become clear in the remainder of this chapter, religious conflict in human rights is not always discussed overtly.

To elucidate the different types of coalitions and cleavages that emerge among religious and secular actors in Human Rights, the remainder of this chapter is organized into two general sections. The first section focuses on religious-secular relations, the second on inter-religious relations. Each type of relation brings with it the potential for cooperation and conflict, and is a source of both alliances and cleavages. I will describe the discursive and procedural tactics that religious groups use in each type of relation to exert influence in a way that allows them to simultaneously stay true to their religious foundations, while maintaining legitimacy within a pluralist and secular public sphere.

As will quickly become clear, the distinction between religious-secular and inter-religious does not perfectly reflect the reality of religious NGO relations, as there is considerable overlap and interaction among the categories. For example, variation among religions that are not problematic in terms of interfaith alliance building can nonetheless serve as bases for inequality in terms of religious-secular relations. The distinction that I make between these two types of relations is meant strictly as a heuristic device for helping us understand these complex interactions and the lines along which religious alliances and cleavages are likely to be formed.

### *Religious-Secular Relations*

One set of questions that I posed to religious human rights advocates focused on the opportunities and challenges religious NGOs confront in their attempts to build alliances, express grievances, and otherwise



exert influence among secular organizations and institutions. In reference to these matters, the advocates that I interviewed perceived religious affiliation as presenting NGOs with both advantages and disadvantages relative to their secular counterparts.

**A. Cooperation.** The main advantage religious NGO leaders reported flows from religious NGOs' embeddedness in organizational networks that extend broadly across and deeply into local cultures. As described by the Program Director of a large interfaith organization, "you've got a network of infrastructure that reaches from the smallest village up to the national level and is part of an international set of traditions... They are transnational structures but they are also local structures."<sup>7</sup>

There are two sets of reasons why religious NGO embeddedness in these simultaneously local and transnational structures creates advantages for religious NGOs. The first set has to do with material resources needed to build mobilizing structures and deliver programs; the second set has to do with the cultural resources and resonance with local communities that allow transnational mobilizing structures and programs to be effective. Both sets of characteristic are attractive to secular organizations that lack them, making religious NGOs potentially valuable partners.

First, the sunk costs of starting new programs are often less for NGOs with ties to deep and extensive organizational networks than would be the case for NGOs operating independently of such ties. For

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Director of interfaith NGO, September 2000, New York City.

example, the activist quoted above described the appeal of religious communities to secular “experts” who design United Nations programs addressing issues such as child poverty or HIV/AIDS:

If they [experts] are mapping specific interventions, we can connect that with religious communities as a structure through which those interventions might be made. So you build the technical capacity of the religious community, say to be able to care for and deliver certain interventions.<sup>8</sup>

He goes on to describe the uniqueness of religion’s mobilization capacity as follows:

The other thing is, particularly in Africa, people are realizing that if you [inaudible] the government, one of the only other structures that has the capacity to reach most of the population in any area or has the potential to do that are religious institutions... and part of this is because of the post-colonial, post-missionary legacy. They [religious institutions] tend to have a significant portion of the health and educational structures in those countries. So, you’ve gotta start to work that way.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Second, due to the geographical reach and historical duration of their ties with local communities, religious groups tend to have considerable experiential knowledge of the concrete needs of local populations. As an activist working for a Catholic women's NGO explained:

As [the NGO], now, we are beginning to find a way that we can have our impact in the United Nations. A lot is because we're really in touch all over the world with grassroots women and really involved like in Africa with health programs, education. Same in Brazil – the Philippines. All over. We know what the situation is and we know native women that know what the situation is. So we can do a lot in getting women to come to these meetings and get a voice and find out what is going on to impact the decisions that the delegates make.<sup>10</sup>

The transnational infrastructures of world religions provide a core incentive for states and secular institutions to include them in the development and implementation of their humanitarian and human rights programs. Recognition of their importance is illustrated by the fact that almost every delegate speaking during UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS made an explicit reference to the indispensability and need for continued involvement of religious communities in addressing the AIDS crisis. For instance, the Catholic Church alone, including

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with member of Catholic women's NGO, June 2000, New York City.

agencies of the Catholic Church and Catholic NGOs, was providing 25% of care to HIV/AIDS victims globally at the time of the UN Special Session.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, religion-based programs have a reputation for being successful. Consider, for example, the United Nations case study “AIDS education through Imams: a spiritually motivated community effort in Uganda.” This program was not only described in the UNAIDS study as “remarkably successful,” but was referred to by several delegations at the Special Session as a model for other countries to consider incorporating. Through it, the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda (IMAU) mobilized 850 mosques and trained 6,800 community volunteers who visited 102,000 homes in Uganda over a period of five years to educate people about HIV and how to protect themselves from it (UNAIDS 1998, p. 13). “After only two years, baseline and follow-up surveys revealed that community members in IMAU project areas showed increases in correct knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention... and a significant reduction in self-reported sexual partners and an increase in self-reported condom use” (IMAU 1998, p. 6). By the end of this five-year period, Uganda Ministry of Health surveys showed a significant decline in HIV infection, with some urban health clinics reporting the percentage of mothers testing HIV-positive to have dropped by almost half (IMAU 1998, p. 8). Mobilization of an effort as extensive as this

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<sup>11</sup> Statement by H.E. Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, President of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance of Health Care Workers, Head of Holy See Delegation to the XXVI Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, New York, June 27, 2001.

would be difficult to achieve in such a short period of without the pre-existing networks of the religious communities.

But the success of such programs is not simply due to the material resources. It is also due to the second set of advantages that religion brings to human rights and humanitarian efforts, advantages that are distinctly cultural. Researchers have already compiled considerable evidence that a lack of sensitivity to local cultures can present major obstacles to the success of development, humanitarian and human rights programs (Fox and Brown 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Ferguson 1990; Mendelsohn and Glenn 2002). In light of this, NGOs affiliated with local religion benefit from a certain form of cultural capital, and organizations that are deficient in knowledge of local cultures can benefit from working with them. NGO advocates described multiple ways in which their unique form of cultural capital is useful.

First, religious affiliation can sometimes actually enhance an NGO's capacity to address human rights violations that are committed in the name of religion. Contrary to the viewpoint that religions are static, unchangeable institutions whose problems are only amenable to imported, secular interventions, religious activists were more likely to articulate a view of religion as dynamic and adaptable. They frequently described how solutions to religion-based human rights conflicts do exist within religious traditions, and since religion is not going to disappear anytime soon, it must be a component of any program that realistically hopes to such violations. One Muslim human rights activist explains:

... we have got an ability to bring a religious legitimacy and the outlook that is needed to analyze the problem properly and find solutions to it. For example, let's say there are certain parts of the world we want to campaign against male chauvenism that has oppressed women – let's say Afghanistan... I really do not believe you can help the women in Afghanistan without an understanding of the religious needs and background and using the religion as a tool of empowering them against the oppression they are facing. But having said that, I think that understanding is completely missing within the bulk of the projects that are being set up.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, religious affiliation allows human rights norms to resonate with grassroots communities in circumstances where imported, secular discourses may fall flat. It provides NGOs with a tool for translating human rights norms into a viable, resonant language that can make them sensible from the perspectives of local communities (Osman 2003).

Religion can also serve as source of inspiration for involvement in activism. For example, the Muslim activist quoted above described how a debate ensued among his organizations' founding members as to whether or not a reference to Islam should be included in the NGO's title. In spite of certain disadvantages associated with doing so, this

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<sup>12</sup> Telephone interview with Chairperson of Islamic human rights NGO, December 2001.

activist felt that, in the long run, the explicit reference to Islam that the organization decided to use ended up working to the organization's advantage.

I don't think without that identity many of our members would be motivated to actually do what we are doing, and even being involved in what we are involved in. Also, because of the level of oppression being faced by Muslims, we are sort of a self help group - an institution FROM the community addressing those things is actually very – it has been a very positive thing to help people to joining in.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, religious activists perceived the advantages of religious affiliation as stemming from the unique qualities of religious institutions, with both material and cultural advantages making them attractive alliance partners. My impression, however, was that religious activists perceive their secular counterparts as quick to recognize the material advantages of cooperation with religious groups, but perhaps less attuned to the cultural advantages and the potential for religion to provide solutions to human rights conflicts. In other words, while partnerships with religious NGOs make sound economic sense, religion's status as a legitimate cultural framework for addressing human rights is still tenuous, creating the potential for conflict in religion-secular relations.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

**B. Conflict.** The main problem for the analyst, however, is that much of the conflict involving religion in Human Rights ensues behind the scenes of transnational diplomacy, beneath the radar of the casual observer. For example, a leader of an NGO affiliated with a minority religion described the following scenario surrounding the text of a UN document:

Activist: It was very interesting to see that, when we were at the Millennium Forum in May, there were a number of NGOs, including a number of French NGOs for that matter, who systematically tried to remove all religiously connotated words ... I heard one NGO for myself that was fighting against the term “compassion” to be included because it had a religious connotation.... But at the same time ... often times now you see the word like “spiritual value” and things like that in text much more than you used to.

Interviewer: So, are there actual debates about whether or not the word “spiritual” would be put in? Or, is this something people would have lengthy dialogues about?

Activist: No. Lengthy dialogues, no. I have found that all of a sudden you’ll find the term.... somebody who has the text – you know, put it – it’s not going to be



somebody raising from the floor and very obviously saying “please can you add spiritual.” But, you know, somebody is going to a negotiation, when a text appears it is going to be in the text and so on and so forth. And somebody is not going to be again raising their flag and saying “remove it.” But all of a sudden it might disappear from the text. You know? I think it’s much more subtle than people making big debates on it.<sup>14</sup>

Consistent with her description of this rather evasive method of text editing, this activist went onto describe the negotiations surrounding a Pakistani proposal for a human rights resolution on the defamation of Islam. She explains:

That really deals with issues that are typically religious. And although there is not much debate in the public, everything is done in the back corridor. But perhaps if you look at it, you might find trends in ways like the text, the way it is moved... I mean there is a whole debate. So, there are lengthy negotiations ensuing. See the problem is that they are occurring in places where you wouldn’t have anything in writing.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with member of minority religious NGO, October 6, 2001, Geneva.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The process that this activist described was also operating in the events leading up to the controversy over the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission's participation in the Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

*Religion and NGO Selection at the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS.*

The terms for participation in the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS stipulated that NGOs without consultative status could participate on a non-objection basis. This meant that any member state could require that a non-accredited NGO be removed from the list of participants. After circulation of the initial list of NGOs on April 19, 2001, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission had received 11 objections, and was subsequently stricken from the list.<sup>16</sup> When the amended, "final" list (which did not include the NGO in question) was distributed on May 18, 2001, representatives from the European Union and Canada raised concerns about the changes, and more specifically about the anonymity and lack of transparency surrounding them. The representative from Norway, concurring with the EU's concerns, stated that:

He found it very disquieting that the list had been changed from the list that had been circulated on April 19. He noted, in particular, that three non-governmental organizations had been stricken from the list with no

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations press Release GA/9857. 06/25/2001. "General Assembly Approves List of Civil Society Participants for June HIV/AIDS Special Session."

explanation given from those that had a duty to explain. Transparency should be at the heart of the Assembly's work, he added. It was unacceptable that there was not at least an explanatory footnote in the document providing information about the changes. Whether or not the changes were legitimate, the reasoning needed to be highlighted for the membership at large.<sup>17</sup>

On June 22, the issue was again raised, when in a meeting of the General Assembly, Canada's representative proposed that the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission be included on the list of participants for the Human Rights Round Table.<sup>18</sup> Egypt, Libya, Qatar and Pakistan all made interventions in opposition to Canada's proposal. But the objections were not made in terms of the substantive issues surrounding the NGO's inclusion or exclusion. Rather, the objections were raised on issues of procedure.<sup>19</sup>

Although the UN press releases describing the controversy did not give details surrounding the procedural issues, procedural objections were raised again during the first day of the Special Session on AIDS, for which I had complete transcripts. Agenda item 5 of the first meeting of the Special Session was entitled "organization of the session" and concerned the list of civil society actors that were permitted to participate in the round tables of the Special Session.

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<sup>17</sup> Press Release GA/9865. 05/18/2001. "Assembly Approves NGOs for Participation in Special Assembly Session on HIV/AIDS."

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Press Release GA/9882. June 22, 2001. "Assembly Fine-Tunes Arrangements For Special Session on Children, Disagrees Over NGO Participation in AIDS Roundtable."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

The transcript of the debate in the General Assembly was revealing.<sup>20</sup> The General Assembly turned its attention to a document containing the list of approved NGOs, along with a separate document containing an amendment. The amendment proposed “that the list of participants for Round Table 2 – the round table on human rights – include the name of Karyn Kaplan of the International Gay and Lesbian Human rights Commission.”<sup>21</sup>

Egypt was the first to raise an objection, stating “It is not the issue of an organization that will participate or not participate in a round table. It is the issue of the right of Member States to use the rule of non-objection basis. If we abolish this rule today, those countries that do not move in a group will be the countries that suffer the most. That is why I am proposing, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) - which represents 56 countries – a motion of no action on this amendment.”

The next representative that the President of the Assembly called upon to speak was the representative of Canada, who explained the reasoning and purpose behind the amendment. He stated, in regard to the objections to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission’s participation, that “After lengthy informal discussions over the past few days, it has become apparent that your Office [the Office of the President of the General Assembly], is not at liberty to divulge the identities of the objecting delegations; nor is it able to

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<sup>20</sup> All information and quotes for my discussion of this meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, Special Session on HIV/AIDS are extracted from United Nations document A/S-26/PV.1. This document is an official record and transcript of the United Nations General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Special Session, 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, Monday, 25 June, 2001, 9:00 a.m., New York.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from “Mr. Hynes,” representative of Canada.

enlighten the Assembly as to the nature or basis of the objections; nor, it seems were any of the anonymous and objecting delegations able or willing to share any such information with other members of the Assembly.” He went on to say that excluding this NGO through these methods set a dangerous precedent, allowing for a system of “anonymous, arbitrary blackballing” that could have a severe chilling effect on all future NGO participation, regardless of the values held by any particular NGO.

When the representative of Sudan took the floor in response, he objected, but not to any of the points made by Canada. Instead, he objected on the basis of a point of order. He directed his comments to the President, stating that the President “should have been advised properly ... that the first speaker to address this very important issue after you returned to the Chair was the representative of Egypt, on behalf of all the Organization of the Islamic Conference member States, and that was in process of voting on the issue that we are addressing. I think that giving the floor to the representative of Canada was a grave mistake, because according to the rules of procedure, once a motion has been proposed it has to be seconded and voted on, and there should be no debate.”

Similar arguments over procedure and points of order ensued, taking several twists and turns. For example, after the Assembly voted on the amendment, the Islamic states retrospectively questioned the legitimacy of the vote due to questions about quorum. First they questioned whether or not sufficient numbers of representatives were present for there to be one; later they raised questions about whether

or not representatives who were present but not voting should be counted. Although most of the procedural issues raised were legitimate, at times they bordered on ridiculous. For example, one representative challenged the President's conclusion that, if a person had voted, they indeed had been present for the vote, the number of votes therefore counting as sufficient evidence of a quorum in the absence of an actual count prior to a vote.

In the end, Egypt's request for no motion was voted down (63 votes opposed, 46 votes in favor, 19 abstentions), and the amendment reinstating the Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission was put favorably to vote. At the end of the session, Islamic states, one by one, refused to vote on the final list of accredited NGOs, resulting in a final vote in favor of the amended list of NGOs. The Islamic states' refusal to vote was in protest of the fact that the Assembly was putting to vote, in public, an issue that was supposed to be resolved informally, with the option of anonymity, and by consensus (i.e. the non-objection rule). Overall, these procedural debates went on for over two and one-half hours. Not once during the process were the issues of religion or homosexuality raised by any member of the OIC.

Press accounts of the event, however, painted a different picture of the proceedings, one that focused exclusively on the religious dimension of the objections to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission's participation in the Summit. Although there was an occasional reference to the objections being raised "on

points of order and rules of procedure,”<sup>22</sup> there was no discussion of what those procedures were, or the fact that the debate over the non-objection basis for participation had very newsworthy implications. Particularly, by over-riding the non-objection rule, the President of the General Assembly changed the non-accredited NGO approval process from one based on consensus to one based on vote, leaving states that are not aligned with dominant blocs at a distinct disadvantage. The objections raised by the OIC states also spoke very directly to another very controversial issue in UN politics – the issue of NGOs being viewed by some southern states as “secular missionaries” working on behalf of northern states’ interests. Allowing NGOs that were not even accredited to participate in the session in spite of the objections raised by southern states could exacerbate concerns that NGOs are instruments of northern states’ foreign policy. That this aspect of the debate went unreported is noteworthy.

Instead of addressing the complexity and variety of issues at stake, the debate was characterized as entirely religion-based, with one reporter claiming that the OIC states raised “moral objections” to the NGO’s inclusion [quotation marks used in press report].<sup>23</sup> In my reading of the transcript, however, not once did I see the phrase “moral objection” used by any of the Islamic states’ representatives during the meeting addressing the participation of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. The representative of

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations Press Release GA/9882. June 22, 2001. “Assembly Fine-Tunes Arrangements for Special Session on Children, Disagrees over NGO Participation in AIDS Round Table.”

<sup>23</sup> Riley, Mark. 2001. “Islamic Nations Block AIDS pact again. *Age*. Article extracted from Global Policy Forum: <http://www.globalpolicy.org>.

Pakistan did describe his objection as “a matter of principle.” But the principle he was referring to was the violation of a procedure (i.e. non-objection) that had been agreed upon and documented in a formal resolution. According to his understanding, the principle of non-objection meant that “The objection raised by any Member State is not a matter for discussion in the General Assembly... We believe that it is not for the General Assembly to consider the merits or demerits of any objection. That is for the committee on NGOs to do.”<sup>24</sup>

Explicit argumentation on the basis of values was present, however, in arguments supporting the amendment allowing the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission to participate. The most explicit value-oriented statement was made by the representative from Norway, who described the issue as “a question of what kind of organization the United Nations is, and what kind of organization we are turning into... That is what this is really about. It is a fight about the soul of the United Nations: in which direction are we going?”<sup>25</sup>

This is not to say that religious actors never raised the issue of religion. On the contrary, religious differences were an important subject of debate in the informal negotiations leading up to the Special Session, when “Several government delegations, including those of the United States, Egypt, Libya, and the Vatican, [attempted] to delete from the draft declaration ... any mention of ... men having sex with men, sex workers and their clients, and injecting drug users

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<sup>24</sup> Statement by representative of Pakistan. A/S-26/PV.1

<sup>25</sup> Statement by representative of Norway A/S-26/PV.1



and their partners.”<sup>26</sup> As will be discussed in greater detail below, this issue was raised often during the Special Session in delegates’ speeches. But the fact remains that religious conflicts are predominantly “backstage” events.

The greater explicit emphasis on religion in informal and preparatory, in comparison to formal and official, venues is part of a larger pattern that is recognizable in the strategies that religious NGOs use to influence the claims making process in Human Rights. Specifically, religious NGO members, often inadvertently but at times quite strategically, use discursive secularization in a way that takes advantage of the procedural rationalism inherent in the diplomatic process.

For instance, the rules for bringing human rights violations to the attention of ECOSOC are very structured in terms of who may attend, who may make statements before the council, and the duration for and circumstances under which they may speak. In the face of such tightly structured opportunities, statements are carefully crafted through multi-stage processes involving formal and informal working groups and preparatory committees. Several NGO members described how, even though they may not actually make formal statements before the council, they are nonetheless very involved in the earlier stages of the process, where issues are hashed out and formal statements developed. As a result, religious individuals and organizations can provide substantial input into the drafting of

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<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch. June, 20, 2001. “UN: AIDS Conference Whitewash – US, Vatican, Egypt Undermining Frank Language in Conference.” Article extracted from Global Policy forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.com>.

statements or documents that are presented by “secular” sources. But activists were also quick to point out that the “real” dialogue begins even prior to preparatory forums, in informal contexts where activists act on the knowledge that “... I know you and I know what your interests are, and I’m preparing a statement, maybe you would help me draft it.”<sup>27</sup>

Using a similar strategy, one interfaith NGO leader described a two-phase process of interfaith mobilization around human rights and humanitarian issues. The first phase involves religious actors from a diversity of traditions arriving at a common understanding of spiritually informed values and objectives. In the second phase, activists translate that common spiritual understanding through a process of discursive secularization. The organization’s objective during this second phase is to translate its platform, or pitch, into a language that will resonate with the broader human rights community without sacrificing the integrity of the group’s spiritual bases. Using the example of a project initiative focused on children’s rights, this activist explains:

We can all express out of our traditions that the child is the center of care in our community. And we’ve all got scriptural or other warrants within our traditions to support that. Now, the message were going to take as religious leaders to the public is not going to be loaded with our individual and particular internal language or

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with leader of large Catholic NGO, June 2000, New York City.

scriptural references. But we're gonna take this shared concern and together find a public language that still has a religious dimension - or, eh, it doesn't - we're not going to sound like Amnesty or some other group, but were going to speak in a language where it allows us to collaborate with specifically human rights organizations, so to speak. So that they can understand a connection. We don't speak, for example, as a Christian... you know we wouldn't speak simply in biblical language which would make it harder to find common cause with secular human rights organizations... So, it's a two step process.<sup>28</sup>

Although religious organizations do occasionally use explicitly religious language in public forums, including the UN, the extent of religious involvement would be underestimated if we emphasized the carefully crafted speeches and official records of participation too heavily. Furthermore, conflicts among organizations, including conflicts over religion, are more likely to occur in preparatory sessions, not in the final statements that are presented in the official, public forums of international institutions. Therefore, the fact that religion often looks like a "non-issue" on the surface cannot be taken as an indication of an absence of religious influence or conflict.

But why is this the case? Why does language become secularized as NGOs move through the processes of constructing statements and presentations? Did not the Millennium Summit of

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Director of Interfaith NGO, June 2000, New York City.

Religious and Spiritual Leaders usher in a new era of religious cooperation and openness in the international community? In theory, it did, and I do not question the sincerity of either the participants or the sponsors of events bringing religious groups into closer dialogue with international institutions. But widespread cultural change is a slow process, not an event. And close reading of diplomatic speeches and press coverage at the Special Session on HIV/AIDS reveals that religion's legitimacy in international institutions is still tenuous and contested. Although diplomatic speech is carefully crafted to avoid giving any impression of hostility or bias, there are nonetheless subtle ways in which representatives, spokespersons, and the press discredit religion and reinforce secular viewpoints.

*Religion, Reason and the Debate over Language*

Consider for example, the debates surrounding the explicit mention of "men who have sex with men, sex workers and their clients, and injecting drug users" in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Parties in favor of as well as parties opposed to explicit references to these groups had both moral and practical reasons for their positions. Parties in favor of the explicit language claimed that to exclude it was an act of denial, stigmatization and discrimination similar to the more pervasive denial and discrimination that was not only morally unacceptable according to human rights standards, but was severely impeding efforts to identify victims, provide treatment and prevent the spread of the epidemic. Parties who objected to the explicit language argued that explicit mention of these groups implied tacit approval of

behaviors that were not only contrary to the beliefs of their cultures, but were the very cause of the epidemic, and would increase the prevalence of the epidemic in their countries if permitted. Though there were both moral and practical arguments on each side of the controversy, the arguments were not consistently treated as such.

For example, during the negotiations leading up to the Special Session, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette held a press conference at UN headquarters. The following question was posed to the Deputy Secretary-General:

Question: Are you concerned that the final declaration may be watered down so much that it will not have the impact the United Nations would like because of serious differences remaining on issues such as homosexuality, prostitution and so forth?<sup>29</sup>

First, it is worth noting that the question is posed by the press not in terms of a conflict between two or more subsets of actors within the United Nations, but between “what the United Nations would like” and what others who have disagreements about “homosexuality, prostitution and so forth” would like.

The Deputy Secretary-General follows suit in her response. She begins by pointing out that there is much good faith and a strong desire among the delegations “to come to an agreement so that the

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations Press Release DSG/SM/134, June 20, 2001. “Transcript of press conference by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette.”

session ends on a full consensus on a good, strong declaration.” But then she goes on to say, “I think that ways will be found to find words that take into account the cultural sensitivities *without doing damage to the intent of the declaration* (my emphasis added).<sup>30</sup> The dispute then, is framed as one between an abstract entity called the United Nations community that is in agreement with “the intent of the declaration,” and a set of presumably outsiders who oppose it.

She then goes on to distinguish among and subtly characterize the types of concerns of each of these parties:

Clearly, I sense that there is a very strong desire across Member States to find this compromise, which will mean that they will have to find the right words to deal with *the reality*, but not to offend *the sensitivities* of some cultures. It is a reality, and it has to be taken into account (my emphasis added).<sup>31</sup>

This statement implicitly creates and reinforces two assumptions. First, that delegations in favor of the inclusion of explicit language are operating from the standpoint of “reality” (e.g. fact, science, objectivity), and second, delegates opposing it are operating from a standpoint of “sensitivity” (e.g. emotion, a absence of concern with “reality” or “facts”). And this was not merely an

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

aberration wherein one spokesperson uttered some carelessly worded phrases. Rather, this characterization of “some cultures” as either ignorant or unconcerned with scientifically established mechanisms of HIV/AIDS transmission was also frequently evinced in delegates’ speeches during the Special Session. In spite of the polite “diplomatese” in which the speeches were written, opposition to explicit language pertaining to homosexuals, injection drug users and prostitutes was variously and frequently described as “ancient taboos,” “moral squeamishness” and “burying our heads in the sand.”

An examination of the actual statements presented by the Islamic representatives during the Special Session, however, reveals that this characterization is not entirely accurate. While Islamic states made no attempt to hide the fact that they approached the issue of HIV/AIDS from the perspective of their religion, they justified this approach on the basis of what they perceived as its proven effectiveness in stemming the tide of AIDS – a perception that was based on the observation that Islamic countries had, and continue to have, the lowest prevalence of HIV/AIDS globally.<sup>32</sup> They defended their positions through reference to the same “facts” as those referenced by their secular counterparts – the facts that HIV/AIDS is especially prevalent among men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and people with multiple sexual partners. But they arrived at different programmatic solutions from those of the majority, based on their cultural contexts. The representative of Pakistan gave what

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<sup>32</sup> According the most recent statistics compiled by UNAIDS, Middle Eastern and Northern African countries account for less than 1percent of HIV cases globally. Within the region, approximately 0.2% of the population is infected.

was perhaps the most diplomatic recognition of this distinction. After discussing the economic aspects of the epidemic, he went onto say:

We believe that every country has to chalk out its own preventative and combative strategy and best suited to its circumstances. International involvement should be limited to resource mobilization, sharing of benefits of research and technological advancement and making available affordable and sustainable treatment and medicines...

We must not let controversial norms overshadow our struggle. But we must remain sensitive to each other's value systems. While pursuing our crusade against the pandemic, let us continue to show respect to each other's culture, faith and values.<sup>33</sup>

He then went on to describe Pakistan's National AIDS Control Program, which has been in place since 1993 even though the country had largely "remained protected from AIDS so far."<sup>34</sup> The program included strategies for information awareness, surveillance, HIV/AIDS testing, blood bank screening, counseling, and bio-social research.

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<sup>33</sup> Statement made by Dr. Abdulk Malik Kasi, Minister for Health of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 25, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



Other Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia, drew more explicit connections between the religion of Islam and the fight against HIV/AIDS. But again, the argument was not one of Islam taking precedence over fighting the disease. Rather it was an argument about Islam's perceived effectiveness in preventing the spread of the disease:<sup>35</sup>

The Kingdom is committed to the international recommendations and strategies that are in conformity with the teachings of Islam... The number of patients infected with AIDS in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is small, not exceeding 440 cases since 1985. The reason for this is the adherence to the religion of Islam, which prohibits sexual relations outside the confines of marriage. In spite of this, an awareness campaign was established by using the media to all groups, especially the young, who are the highest risk group. The program emphasizes adherence to Islamic teachings and explaining the dangers of the disease, its complications, the way it spreads, and ways to avoid it.<sup>36</sup>

Iran's representative gave what was perhaps the most strongly worded statement on behalf of Islam. His statement, unlike those of

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<sup>35</sup> It is not my intent here to evaluate any of the claims to effectiveness made by any of the parties, only to establish the nature of such claims.

<sup>36</sup> Statement by H.E. Dr. Yacoub Bin Youssouf Al-Masruwah, Deputy Minister of health for Preventive Medicine. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 27, 2001.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, did make pointedly moral, as well as causal, claims. His references to morality were rather lengthy, but their general point and spirit are captured in the following excerpts:

Let us not delude ourselves. The spread of the disease cannot be addressed in a vacuum. The moral aspect involved in and around the why and how of it all and the established fact that irresponsible sexual behavior, of different forms, has been among the key factors in the spread of the disease, cannot, and in fact, should not be brushed aside, under any pretext, even in the name and under the guise of empathy for the hapless infected... The question, however, for all of us is whether the totality of the international community can bring itself to the point of addressing the real causes of the pandemic and coming up with what it takes to combat it, effectively and meaningfully, and certainly with empathy and compassion...

The issues and concepts under discussion in the present conference involve long-established fundamental ethical principles and values, they simply cannot be subjected to a post-modern “laissez-fair, laisser passer” mentality and approach...

Care and treatment of the already infected is all but imperative and should be pursued with vigour as a matter of priority. Yet, it is our considered view that prevention, in the broadest sense of the word and most certainly based on elements of moral choice, responsible sexual behaviour and promotion and protection of family, provides a more effective shield against further spread of the pandemic.<sup>37</sup>

This statement is thoroughly moralistic and judgmental of the behaviors that are associated with HIV/AIDS transmission. It also contains, however, a cause and effect argument about how the disease is spread - an argument based on the same facts as those that are used to defend the inclusion of explicit language. But in this case, the tables are turned, and it is the secularists who are accused of “burying their heads in the sand” and ignoring “the reality” surrounding the causes of HIV transmission and effective solutions.

Both sides are in agreement as to the multiple causes of HIV transmission, including injecting drug use and risky sexual behaviors such as non-monogamy and men having sex with men. However, they propose different solutions. The majority group claims, given the knowledge about how HIV is transmitted, that the best way to confront the epidemic is to specifically target for testing and treatment individuals who engage in these behaviors. The minority group, given this same knowledge about how HIV is transmitted, along with the

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<sup>37</sup> Statement by Dr. Ali-Akbar Sayyari, Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic republic of Iran. United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 26, 2001.

knowledge of the relatively low prevalence of HIV/AIDS in their countries, claims that the best way to confront the epidemic within their countries is to continue to limit these behaviors at the outset.

What then, are the practical implications, from each perspective, of the various forms of language proposed to describe vulnerable groups? From the standpoint of Islamic states' representatives, to explicitly give priority to and, from their perspective, tacitly approve of, "men who have sex with men, sex workers and their clients, and injecting drug users" would be to compromise a cultural system that they view as an effective preventive measure against HIV/AIDS. This claim is succinctly captured in the representative of Egypt's statement: "Moral and religious values have protected many countries and we should not omit these resources when it is now desperately needed."<sup>38</sup>

From the majority standpoint, use of the more abstract phrase "vulnerable groups" would "weaken the document" by failing to explicitly name those groups who are most vulnerable. It is not clear, however, why the use of the more general phrase "vulnerable groups" would weaken actual programs targeted toward them. As the executive director of the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations pointed out, he would have "preferred explicit language, but the absence of it would not slow the Council down. 'The entire world knows who the vulnerable groups are. Funders and

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<sup>38</sup> Statement by H.E. Prof. Ismail Sallam, Minister of Health and Population. United Nations General assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 2001.

donors in many countries who do not agree with this are still working with those populations.’”<sup>39</sup>

What remains, however, are concerns about values and the desire of the majority to make a public, principled statement regarding openness toward the categories of people in question. Even more important, there remain serious moral questions about how certain categories of people and behaviors should be treated within societies. Though these moral questions are certainly no less important than the practical questions regarding HIV/AIDS, they are indeed *moral* questions.

This brings us back to our original concern with differential treatment of discourse. What many delegations and commentators failed to come to terms with is the fact that the debate over explicit language was one that cannot be accurately characterized in the simplistic terms of a debate between religion and science, or between culture and “reality.” Rather, there are two intersecting debates. The first is a debate about how, objectively, to prevent and defeat HIV. Proponents on each side of this debate are arguing from the standpoint of the perceived effectiveness of their chosen methods. The second debate is a moral debate about human rights and the treatment of certain categories of people. Proponents on each side of this debate are arguing from the standpoint of values. And there is nothing wrong with arguing from the standpoint of values. But, by failing to acknowledge how both sides engage in both types of argument, one side’s discourse is privileged with the status of objectivity, while the

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations Press Briefing. June 27, 2002. “Press Conference by AIDS Service Organizations.”

other is discredited from the outset as being based in “mere belief.” Furthermore, these determinations are made less according to the content of any particular message, and more according to the identity of the messenger. In other words, religious groups, by virtue of their status as “religious,” have less maneuverability in terms of being able to assert values-based statements and still maintain legitimacy. Under such circumstances, arguments about procedure and points of order may indeed be more effective.

To the extent that differential treatment of religious and secular speech operates in Human Rights, it is understandable why actors use the combined tactics of discursive secularization and procedural rationalism in their broader mobilization efforts. While opportunities for alliance formation with secular groups and participation in the global public sphere are abundant, they require certain adaptations on the part of religious groups in terms of their self-presentation.

However, the extent to which these strategies are necessary or effective cannot be assumed to apply equally to all religious groups. The next section will address this variation by moving away from the uni-dimensional focus on religious-secular relations, and adding the dimension of inter-religious competition.

### *Inter-religious Relations*

By and large, activists talked about inter-religious relations in terms of cooperation and alliances. Indeed, each NGO representative readily described numerous examples of joint projects with NGOs of faith traditions different from their own. But one topic which religious

NGO leaders did talk about more in terms of competition was funding. In fact, they consistently reported that one of the main challenges that religious NGOs confront is secular donors' hesitation to fund religious groups. Two general reasons were described for this hesitation.

First, some secular donors hesitate to fund religious NGOs for fear of being perceived by the public, by governments, or by other organizations as partial to one particular religion. Such perceptions of partiality leave potential donors vulnerable to accusations of "picking sides" in religious conflicts, or in debates over religiously charged issues such as family planning.<sup>40</sup> A second barrier presents itself in the form of many northern countries' legal restrictions regarding the separation of religion and state, which effectively bar government-supported organizations from contributing to religious endeavors. One common strategy for negotiating these barriers is to seek funding not for an NGO itself, but for particular projects that are demonstrably and exclusively secular in terms of their objectives and methods of implementation.<sup>41</sup>

However, even this secularizing strategy is more effective for some religious groups than for others. Even if religious NGOs do not themselves discriminate against one another, contributing publics, as well as some secular NGOs, foundations and governments, are perceived by many activists as allowing religious differences to influence their willingness to provide support. This preferential treatment occurs in several forms.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Treasurer of Jewish human rights organization, September 2000, Washington, D.C..

<sup>41</sup> These interviews were conducted in 2000 and 2001, prior to the Bush administration's unveiling of "Faith-based initiatives."

First, when competing for funding at the national level, NGOs affiliated with religious traditions that are familiar or mainstream enjoy certain advantages over organizations affiliated with religious traditions that appear foreign to that context. But the advantages are not necessarily due to any attachment to the favored religion on the part of potential donors. Rather, religious affiliation functions more like a “name brand.” The familiarity of the name brand affords advantages in terms of competition among individual organizations as well as competition among religious traditions more generally in their efforts to obtain outside support.

In terms of competition among individual NGOs, religious organizations that have been operating in human rights or humanitarian sectors for an extended duration benefit from positive reputations and relationships of trust developed with past and present donors. For example, donors in the US might be more willing to fund a particular Christian NGO’s program than a Muslim NGO’s program simply because they have a record of positive experiences (or at least a lack of negative experiences) with the former. This record lowers the economic and public relations risks associated with providing support. Islamic organizations, to the extent that they have not been operating as long as Christian organizations in the US, lack comparable portfolios. This dynamic is reflected in one Catholic activist’s comments when I asked her about how Catholic affiliation influences the way that her organization is perceived in UN circles:



Activist: The people at the UN know that, for the most part, our organizations don't have anything to gain from this. There's not a financial - they're not in business, they're not, for the most part, they are not looking for personal glory. They really believe in the things that they do.

Interviewer: Because you're an NGO? Or because you're religious?

Activist: Because we've built up a reputation. They know your organization. They know you as a person.

Interviewer: Do you think a new religious organization would have the same credibility?

Activist: They'd have to build it up – that confidence.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of competition among organizations that vary in terms of religious affiliation, organizational age would then translate into an advantage that systematically favors Judeo-Christian organizations since they tend on average to have had more time to develop positive relationships with northern donors.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with member of Catholic NGO, September 2000, New York City.

<sup>43</sup> For example, among the human rights organizations in my dataset, the average age among organizations did vary significantly by religious tradition. For example, on average, Jewish organizations were the oldest in the dataset, with an average of 62 years, while the average age for Muslim organizations, the youngest in the dataset, was 30 years. Catholic and non-Catholic Christian NGOs averaged 45 and 35 years of age respectively.

The activist quoted above further went on to describe how differences in credibility as a result of age can create difficulty in terms of interfaith alliance building:

Activist: I worked with the United Nations Environment Program. They had what they call the Environmental Sabbath..... We tried and tried to get as many groups together, but there seemed to be a preponderance of both Protestant and Catholic. And there were always Jewish representatives, they were always there, but we couldn't get the other groups. It was very hard for them to send - I don't know what it was...

And then they did appear. And when the Muslims came and became active they wanted, and rightfully so, they said "We cannot use Sabbath as the title. We do not observe a Sabbath." So then they began to call it a "Religious Partnership." It's an example of how the people who had been here and had worked on this thing could very well say... "[INAUDIBLE] this name! We have established a reputation with this name. People understand who we are. Now you're gonna - " You know? It's not simple. It's not that simple.

I think to everybody's credit we went along with changing the title. But it wasn't all that easy - because of that fear

of losing the credibility they accrued because they had already established a relationship.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to competition among individual organizations, competition among entire religious traditions appears to operate according to a similar mechanism. Specifically, activists perceived public familiarity with a religion to be positively associated with donations to its NGO affiliates. For instance, individuals in the US might be more likely to donate to Catholic programs than minority NGO programs not because of any agreement with the tenets of Catholicism, or even because of the relative objective merits of each organizations' programs. Rather, it is because the cognitive connection between Catholicism and humanitarian work is a familiar one that "makes sense" in the American context. The same cannot be as easily said for public perceptions of the relationship between humanitarian work and say, Scientology, or even a religion such as Islam or Sikhism.

A leader of a minority religious NGO gave the following example when I asked how religious affiliation affects an NGO's ability to acquire public support:

I think that it depends on the country, but I also think it depends on which religion. If you are an organization of the main, recognized religion of that country ...if you are the group of I don't know, Lutheran Churches in

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Germany, people are going to take you seriously. But if you are some obscure religious organization, they might not. So, it's normal. It's not a criticism at all. I think it's very normal. Because it's something that people know, so they are familiar with, so they are familiar with it so they know that where they are going to put their money it's going to be used in a proper way. But if you are some obscure group, you might be perhaps excellent, but you also might be some kooks.<sup>45</sup>

It appears then that religious organizations are vulnerable to a “liability of newness” similar to that which exists within various industries (Stinchcombe 1965). Specifically, newer organizations are at disadvantage compared to organizations that have been operating in the non-profit sectors for longer periods of time and have therefore established legitimacy, relationships of trust, and favorable reputations among potential supporters.

Preference for certain religious NGOs over others is not always a mere function of familiarity, however. A small number of minority activists also reported more overt biases operating – biases based in stereotypes and misconceptions about certain religions. For example, Muslim and Sikh activists each gave examples where members of the human rights community assumed that, based on their religious affiliation, their organizations represented religious fundamentalists.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with representative of minority religious NGO, October 2000, Geneva.

And making matters worse, fundamentalism itself is sometimes assumed to be associated with radicalism, violence, or terrorism.

The automatic association of certain religions with fundamentalism or extremism is captured by one activist's account of a discussion he had with a human rights worker for one of the major human rights organizations. He asked his colleague "Why are you not campaigning for those people who are being imprisoned in Turkey – journalists and so forth, who normally you campaign quite vigorously for - this class of individuals? Just because they are Islamic, why are you not doing it?" His colleague's response was that he had "put a couple of those cases up, but there was tremendous backlashes from campaigners of that organization, saying they don't want to campaign for Muslim fundamentalists."<sup>46</sup>

One very frustrated activist gave an example of how similar assumptions operate in international institutions. When I asked her how others responded when members of her NGO would make comments like "Its part of our faith to defend the rights of the downtrodden," the activist responded:

Activist: Suspect. People are suspect. Because [our religion] has this stigma of being terrorists. Yeah, okay, terrorists that care about human rights.

Interviewer: Do you think it would be different if you were to say "it's part of our Christian faith?"

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<sup>46</sup> Telephone interview with Director of Islamic human rights NGO, December 2001.

Activist: Oh yeah. You get an RC [Roman Catholic] bishop up there saying “we believe that equality and world peace blah blah blah is so important ma ma ma ma,” he’s just absolutely revered. You get a [minority religious adherent] up there and they go “Huh?” See what I mean? Because they’ve already got a perception in their own minds about what [our religion] is or isn’t. And they haven’t delved any deeper. They haven’t looked beyond the [mode of religious dress].... They’re basing [their opinions] on media reports, on sensationalism, on incidents...”<sup>47</sup>

An alternative interpretation of the differential treatment that this activist reported may be that religious biases operate according to whether or not their statements are consistent with dominant viewpoints on the issues in question. By “dominant” I mean that the viewpoints are either shared by the majority or are in the interests of powerful actors within the field.

For instance, compared to statements made by Islamic representatives at the Special Session on HIV/AIDS, the World Council of Churches (WCC) spoke from a more explicitly religious standpoint. The WCC’s representative described HIV/AIDS as “an illness that violates God’s will for His creation” and described their

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with spokesperson for minority NGO. September 2000, Ottawa.

“spirit of voluntarism and genuine compassion” as “facilitated by our spiritual mandate.”<sup>48</sup>

It might indeed be the case that the World Council of Churches has greater freedom of religious expression relative to the members of the OIC because of a straightforward bias that favors Christian organizations. But we also need to take into account the fact that, unlike the viewpoints expressed by the OIC states, the WCC expressed viewpoints that were wholly in support of the viewpoints held by the secular majority at the Special Session. For example, the WCC concurred with the majority in the General Assembly that “High risk and vulnerable groups (e.g. persons with drug dependencies, prisoners, refugees, migrant populations, internally displaced persons, people of homosexual orientation) require particular attention and accompaniment fully respecting their essential human right.” Furthermore, the WCC was keen to “dismiss the widespread myth that all churches and religious organizations are against the use of condoms.”<sup>49</sup>

But the Vatican also used explicitly religious language to defend its position. Consider these excerpts from the statement given at the Special Session by the head of the Holy See delegation:

On various occasions, His Holiness Pope John Paul II has affirmed that those suffering from HIV/AIDS must be provided with full care and shown full respect, given

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<sup>48</sup> Statement by Dr. Christopher Benn, representing the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 27, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

every possible moral and spiritual assistance, and indeed treated in a way worthy of Christ himself. According to the Pope, the merciful love of God needs to be shown especially towards the orphaned children of parents who have died of AIDS...

In many cases, HIV/AIDS implies problems also at the level of existential values; it is a true pathology of the spirit which harms not only the body but the whole person, interpersonal relationships and social life, and is often accompanied by a crisis of moral values...

No one can deny that sexual license increases the danger of contracting the disease. It is in this context that the values of matrimonial fidelity and of chastity and abstinence can be better understood. Prevention, and the education which fosters it, are realized in respecting human dignity and the person's transcendent destiny, and in excluding campaigns associated with models of behavior which destroy life and promote the spread of the evil in question.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Statement by H.E. Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, representing the Holy See delegation. United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 2001.



But unlike the World Council of Churches, the Vatican's position conflicted in very important ways with the viewpoints expressed by the majority, and was therefore criticized by major human rights organizations as "getting their way" and seeing to it that "the denial and discrimination that have helped spread the disease will continue unabated."<sup>51</sup> If, as the minority activist above perceived, Catholic and Christian speech is privileged relative to other religious groups simply on the basis of its being Catholic or Christian, such criticisms against the Church might have muted.

Having said that, the Holy See does appear to have a pattern of using the most explicitly religious language relative to that of the other religious groups at the UN. But the relative freedom of expression assumed by the Catholic Church may not be a function of the same factors that determine types of expression for other religious groups. There are two intersecting reasons for this exception. First, unlike any other Western religious institution, the Holy See technically is considered a state and has permanent observer status at the United Nations. Therefore, compared to a religious NGO, it is not vulnerable to having its rights of participation denied or revoked as a result of discursively "going against the grain."<sup>52</sup>

Second, unlike the Islamic states, the Holy See is nonetheless of Western origins. And although the West is often denoted as the "secular West," it cannot be assumed that all confluence of interest

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch. June 20, 2001. "UN: AIDS Conference Whitewash: US, Vatican, Egypt Undermining Frank Language in Conference." Article extracted from Global Policy Forum. <http://www.globalpolicy.org>.

<sup>52</sup> Some groups, such as Catholics for a Free Choice and the associated See Change Movement, are trying to have the Holy See's observer status removed. But whether or not they will succeed in this endeavor any time soon is highly questionable.

and ideology between Christian religion and Western states has dissolved. As already mentioned above, one way this relationship between Christian religion and the West may play out is in terms of the relative legitimacy Christian groups are afforded in the north, which provides the bulk of financial support to “global civil society” (Uvin 2000). But it may also be the case that the depth, expansiveness, and level of interorganizational coordination within the Catholic organizational universes gives it certain leverage over other religious groups, especially minorities.

At this point, however, these hypotheses about variation in religious influence are only conjecture. Putting them to the test will be the task of the next chapter. Specifically, Chapter Five will use logistic regression analysis to predict religious NGO access to one important form of capital in global civil society – the social capital that accrues through formal ties with international institutions. I will examine the two types of religious NGO characteristics discussed in this chapter – resources and resonance – to determine the relative weight of each in determining the odds of obtaining consultative status with international institutions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### WORLD CULTURE AND STRATIFICATION: RELIGIOUS NGO SELECTION IN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

This chapter examines the role of international institutions in selecting among religious NGOs for certification, and subsequently legitimation, within the field of human rights. I accomplish this task by elucidating key characteristics that distinguish religious human rights organizations that have IGO ties from those that do not have IGO ties. As Tarrow points out, “certification operates as a powerful selective mechanism in contentious politics, because a certifying site always recognizes a limited range of identities, performances and claims” (Tarrow, 2004, p. 22). As a result, requirements for certification can influence structural power<sup>1</sup> among religious groups, by differentially permitting access to the formal arenas where issues such as religious freedom or women’s rights (which are often of concern to religious groups) are negotiated. In the process, accreditation standards proscribe the incentives and disincentives human rights NGOs are faced with when considering whether to maintain, adopt, or de-emphasize various aspects of religious discourse and practice. For instance, normative expectations that religion be detached from politics, or observant of the rights of

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<sup>1</sup> Following Roy, by “structural power” I mean “the ability to determine the context within which decisions are made by affecting the consequences of one alternative over another” and influencing the rules according to which interactions and exchanges among organizations are organized (Roy 1997, p.13).

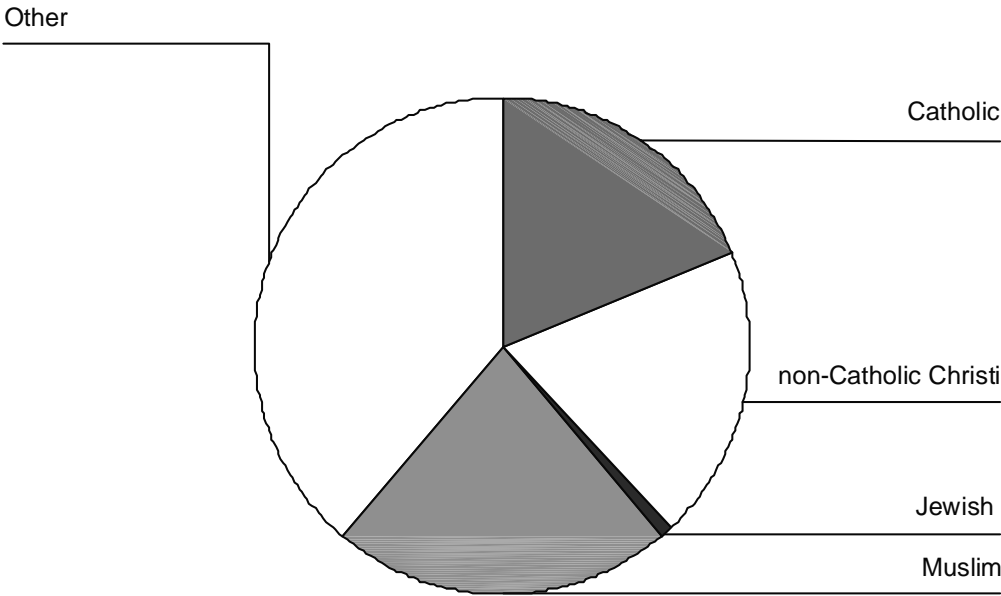
homosexuals, will require greater compromises for some religious groups than for others, potentially having a transformative influence on accreditation-seeking NGOs whose ideologies and practices are in tension with these ideals.

My main argument in this chapter is that the normative standards that guide NGO selection for consultative status with international institutions – standards that are rooted in world cultural principles - are not neutral with regard to region or religion, and reinforce stratification among religious groups within transnational organizational fields.<sup>2</sup> For instance, as Figures 5.1 and 5.2 reveal, NGO ties to IGOs are disproportionately distributed along religious lines. The figures illustrate the results of a cross-tabulation of IGO consultative status with expected values given the proportion of the world's population represented within each of the world's major religious traditions. As the figure reveals, Christian, Jewish, and especially Catholic human rights NGOs are significantly favored over Muslims and "others," a category that includes diverse groups such as Buddhists, Jains, Hindus and religions commonly describes as "new religious movements." As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, this disproportion by religion parallels a similar pattern in favor of NGOs from the global north.

Using binomial logistic regression, I will explain patterns of consultative status through an examination of NGO conformity to two types of organizational characteristics. The first set of characteristics

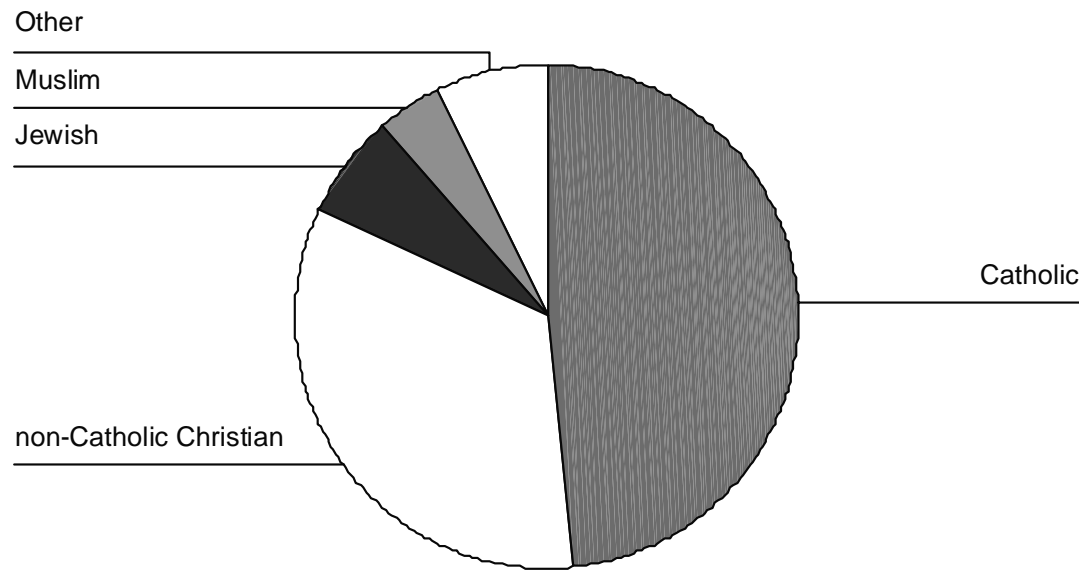
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<sup>2</sup> Following Pyle and Davidson (2003), I define religious stratification as "a relatively stable ranking of religious groups in terms of their access to power, privilege, and prestige."



Source: Encyclopedia Britannica

Figure 5.1 Proportion of Global Population within Major Religions, Excluding Nonreligious.



Sources: Yearbook of International Organizations  
and Human Rights Internet

Figure 5.2 Frequency of IGO Consultative Status by  
Religion, Excluding Nonreligious

indicates conformity to standards rooted in the prevailing world cultural norms operating in the field of human rights; the second set indicates different components of organizational structure that serve as proxies for organizational resource capacity. I will show that, in order to understand ideological selection as it applies to religion, we need to take into account the interaction between the cultural templates that inform modes of organizing in global civil society and the resource capacities of NGOs affiliated with different global regions and religions. Drawing upon this evidence, I will argue that, though world culture has secularized, its relationship with Christian religion remains important. Specifically, the relationship is expressed in the organizational advantages afforded northern and Catholic NGOs, thereby contributing to stratification in the human rights field.<sup>3</sup>

By demonstrating the relationship between world cultural principles and stratification, this chapter will expose an important contradiction; it will highlight an inconsistency between the egalitarian discourse of Human Rights on the one hand, and patterns of inequality within the same field on the other. But my point is not simply to argue that a decoupling between discourse and practice exists. Rather, it will be to show that, in spite of these

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<sup>3</sup> The analysis that follows focuses only on the current balance of power among religious NGOs in the human rights field. It is not designed to support claims about institutional change over time. I will argue, however, that historical relationships between religious and secular power are imprinted in the patterns of stratification that currently exist among religious groups in the world system. The analysis is intended to raise, not answer, historical questions about the construction of the human rights field, and the diverse interests and assumptions at play in the creation of the standards that guide NGO certification in international politics. These questions speak very strongly to debates about the extent to which international institutions are truly autonomous, or merely extensions of international relations, through which international inequalities are institutionalized and reproduced.

inconsistencies, indeed because of them, discourses and practices in the world polity operate as a mutually supporting, coherent system. Specifically, I will show how egalitarian world cultural discourse actually enables stratification within organizational fields.

### *Hypotheses*

To begin, after empirically demonstrating that Northern and Christian NGOs are indeed disproportionately over-represented in IGOs, I will test the first two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: Religious NGOs that are in conformity with world cultural principles will have greater odds of obtaining IGO consultative status than religious NGOs that are not in conformity with world cultural principles.*

*Hypothesis 2: When controlling for conformity to world cultural principles, regional and religious differences will no longer be predictive of IGO consultative status.*

If hypotheses 1 and 2 prove valid, we will have identified a link between world cultural discourse and NGO stratification by region and religion. The next step is to identify the mechanisms through which this link operates. Identification of these mechanisms requires us to take into consideration two features of organizations that are of particular interest to historical institutionalists: access to resources,



and the role of states and other standard setting institutions in structuring organizational fields (Wuthnow 1987, p. 15).

As I discussed earlier, international institutions form alliances with NGOs because they are in part dependent upon them for the technical expertise, material resources, or local knowledge that NGOs can provide for the implementation of international institutions' programs (Wapner 1995; Lipshutz 1999). In light of this preference for NGOs that can be "useful" to international organizations, we should find that "insider" and "outsider" (i.e. accredited vs. unaccredited) statuses are predicted by various measures of organizational capacity (e.g. large membership, globally extensive infrastructures).

*Hypothesis 3: Resources of NGOs will predict IGOs ties.*

If hypothesis 3 is accurate, it should also explain why northern organizations and organizations affiliated with Western religions, especially Catholicism, would have an advantage in acquiring consultative status. First, religious organizations with northern secretariats, by definition, have ties with northern states. By extension, they are more likely to have access to the financial resources that such ties imply (Fox and Brown 1998; O'Brien 2000; Uvin 2000, Mendelsohn and Glenn 2002).

Second, the historical relationship of Christian religion to Western development has left Christian religion, especially Catholicism, with certain advantages over non-Christian religious

organizations, as was discussed in Chapter Two. If, as a result of these differences in historical relations with western states, resources and the ways that they are organized vary by both regional and religious affiliation, it follows that the structural characteristics of organizations should not only predict IGO ties, but should also explain regional and religious differences in IGO ties.

*Hypothesis 4: When controlling for structural characteristics of NGOs, regional and religious differences will no longer predict consultative status.*

The task at hand, however, is to show how world culture mediates this relationship between resources and IGO ties. The point is to show that standards based in world cultural principles are not equally achievable across NGO contenders. Instead, NGOs with the greatest resources will have the greatest capacity for, and perhaps even a greater interest, in enacting world cultural principles through their operations and structures. Therefore, in spite of the fact that world cultural principles are egalitarian, they legitimate certification standards that favor the more powerful NGOs in the human rights field. As a result, they are inegalitarian in their effects.

*Hypothesis 5: Structural characteristics of NGOs will account for the relationship between conformity to world cultural principles and IGO ties.*

The analysis that I present below delineates the characteristics, both cultural and structural, that distinguish religious groups that have ties with international institutions from those that do not. In the process, I will demonstrate both the usefulness and limits of normative frameworks for understanding the organizing principles of NGOs in global civil society. I will show that, although world cultural principles do predict the types of organizations that gain access to the core institutions of the world polity, their influence works through their interaction with variables more likely to be emphasized by historical institutionalists. While world culture informs the organizational standards that guide the certification process, these standards, by and large, favor NGOs that already have the greatest access to transnational resources and historically strongest ties to the northern states (i.e. the standards favor northern and Christian organizations). As a result, world culture is implicated in the reproduction of patterns of inequality among religious organizations in the field of human rights, where the egalitarian principles described by world polity scholars inhere.

### *Data*

My primary source of data is the *Human Rights Directory* managed by Human Rights Internet (HRI).<sup>4</sup> Where possible, I supplemented or verified information on each organization found in the HRI database with entries from the 2000/2001 edition of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (YBIO) and information from

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed description of Human Rights Internet, see Chapter Three.

organizations' web sites. Following the criteria for inclusion as a "religious NGO" that I detailed in Chapter Three, I identified 546 religious human rights organizations worldwide. However, after omitting defunct organizations, only 539 of them were used in the following analysis. I omitted defunct organizations because in the *HRI Directory*, information on defunct organizations is extremely incomplete. The fact that, of the 546 religious human rights organizations that I identified, only 7 were reported by HRI or by the *YBIO* as being defunct attests to this incompleteness.

Another weakness of the *HRI Directory* is that it does not contain longitudinal records. Each record does contain information on the organization's founding date. However, as the entry for a particular organization is updated, its previous entry is discarded. As a result, the *Directory* cannot be used to systematically track changes in organizations over time. Nonetheless, the logistic regressions that I present below do provide a valuable account of the way the human rights field is currently stratified, and the types of organizations that it favors, as of the year 2000. Detailed questions about the historical events and processes that lead to this state of affairs are a topic for further study.

### Dependent Variable

For the dependent variable, presence or absence of consultative status, I consulted *HRI* and the UN's list of *NGOs with ECOSOC Consultative Status* (July 2002) to determine whether each organization had

consultative status with any of the following international organizations: the Organization of American States (OAS), the Council of Europe (CE), European Commission (EC), Organization of African Unity (OAU), World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), or the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). I coded presence or absence of consultative status as of the year 2000 as a binary variable. Overall, 25% (n=135) of the organizations used in the analysis (N=539) have IGO consultative status with at least one of these organizations.

### Independent Variables

For each organization, I collected information on the location of secretariat, religious affiliation, framing of organizational mission, geographic focus, age of organization, size of membership, and geographic expansiveness. The first two variables that I include in the model, location of secretariat (SECR) and religious tradition (RELTRAD), allow us to confirm the existence of the patterns that this analysis seeks to explain – patterns of regional and religious variation among NGOs in terms of IGO ties.

For location of secretariat, after running preliminary analyses, I arrived at seven categories: 1. USA/Europe, which includes the United States and Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe (excluding Switzerland and Belgium), 2. Canada, 3. Swiss/Belg, which includes Switzerland and Belgium (each home to major international

institutions), 4. Africa, 5. Latin America, 6. Middle East, and 7. East Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Table 5.1 illustrates the breakdown of religious NGOs by location of Secretariat. Combining the USA, Canada, Swiss/Belg, and Europe, 49% of religious human rights NGOs have secretariats in northern countries (n=264). Of the remaining 51%, Latin American NGOs account for 14.8% (n=80) of the dataset, 13.5% (n=73) of the NGOs have African secretariats, NGOs based in Asia account for 21% (n=113), while only 1.7% (n=9) of the NGOs in the dataset are based in the Middle East. Speaking in terms of a simple North/South dichotomy, roughly half of religious human rights NGOs are based in the global North, and half in the global South.

For religious tradition, I distinguished among the following groups: 1. Roman Catholic, 2. Non-Catholic Christian, including ecumenical organizations, 3. Jewish, 4. Muslim, 5. Interfaith, and 6. Others. The last group, “Others,” includes Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and NGOs representing New Religious Movements such as

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<sup>5</sup> When extracting information from the HRI entries, I recorded the country where each organization’s principal secretariat was located. I first coded the secretariats into 11 categories: USA, Canada, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Eastern/Central Europe, Switzerland, Belgium, Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. After regressing IGO consultative status on this categorical variable, I collapsed the northern country categories into three categories that reflected their similarities in relation to the dependent variable. The USA, northern Europe, central/eastern Europe, and Western Europe were collapsed into the category “USA/Europe.” Switzerland and Belgium were collapsed into the category “Swiss/Belg,” since NGOs with secretariats in Switzerland and Belgium had significantly greater odds of IGO consultative status than did NGOs from any of the other Northern states. This should come as no surprise given their proximity to the UN and EU- based international institutions. Many of the larger organizations that have consultative status with major IGOs maintain their principle secretariats in Switzerland or Belgium precisely in order to be in close proximity to these institutions. Therefore, to keep Swiss and Belgian organizations in the same category as other northern organizations would be misleading, as it would entail partially sampling on the dependent variable, and artificially weighting the analysis in favor of a “northern bias.” Therefore, I classified Swiss and Belgian NGOs into their own separate category. Canada remained in its own category, as Canadian NGOs showed decreased odds of obtaining consultative status when compared to all of the other northern states.

Table 5.1 Frequencies: Religious Human Rights NGOs by Secretariat as of 2000.

Location of Secretariat	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
USA	113	21.0	21.0	21.0
Canada	32	5.9	5.9	26.9
Swiss/Belg	30	5.6	5.6	32.5
Europe	89	16.5	16.5	49.0
Latin America	80	14.8	14.8	63.8
Africa	73	13.5	13.5	77.4
Middle East	9	1.7	1.7	79.0
East Asia	113	21.0	21.0	100.0
Total	539	100.0	100.0	

Sources: Human Rights Internet and Yearbook of International Organizations

Scientology, all of which had extremely small numbers of human rights NGOs listed in the *Directory*. The coefficients for this last category should be interpreted with this diversity in mind.

Table 5.2 illustrates the breakdown of Religious NGOs by religious tradition. As the table illustrates, human rights NGOs are unequally distributed across religious traditions. If we break the population down in terms of a simple Judeo-Christian vs. non-Judeo-Christian dichotomy, Jewish and Christian organizations account for 84.5% of the organizations in the dataset. Christians alone, including Catholics, comprise 78.3%. Non-Judeo-Christian organizations, combined with the Interfaith organizations of which minority groups are often members, account for only 15% of religious human rights NGOs. This is in spite of the fact that non-Judeo-Christians (excluding atheists) comprise roughly 63 % of the world's population.<sup>6</sup> Table 5.3 presents a cross-tabulation of proportions of human rights NGOs by religious tradition against the expected proportions given world's population represented within each of the world's major religious traditions. As the table reveals, Catholic, non-Catholic Christian and Jewish organizations are over-represented in Human Rights, indicating that religious human rights mobilization is not proportional to global membership across the world's religious traditions. I will return to this point about proportional mobilization later in this article, since it is important for interpreting patterns of consultative status.

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<sup>6</sup> Data extracted from Adherents.com



Table 5.2 Frequencies: Religious Human Rights NGOs  
by Religious Affiliation as of 2000.

Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Catholic	137	25.4	26.8	26.8
NonCatholic Christian	26.3	48.8	51.5	78.3
Jewish	32	5.9	6.3	84.5
Muslim	22	4.1	4.3	88.8
Interfaith	30	5.6	5.9	94.7
Other	27	5.0	5.3	100.0
Total	511	94.8	100.0	
Missing	28	5.2		
Total	539	100.0		

Sources: Human Rights Internet and Yearbook of International  
Organizations

Table 5.3 Chi-Square: Religious NGO Counts  
by Religious Tradition X Expected Counts  
Given Proportion of Global Population  
within Each Religion

Religious Tradition	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Catholic	137	97.1	39.9
NonCatholic Christian	263	97.1	165.9
Muslim	22	132.9	-110.9
Jewish	32	5.1	26.5
Other/Interfaith	57	178.9	-121.9
Total	511		

$p. < .001$

Sources: Human Rights Internet, the Yearbook  
Of International Organizations, and  
Adherents.com (2002)

### Explanatory Variables

To examine the relationship between certification and stratification in Human Rights, I created variables indicating two types of organizational characteristics. The first type measures conformity to world cultural principles including secularism, individualism, universalism and political neutrality. The second type measure structural characteristics of organizations, including age, membership size, and expansiveness of operations.

*Secularism and Individualism.* As stated in Chapter Two, classical theories of modernization assert a positive relationship between the rationalization of societies' institutions and religious decline. This same assertion is made in the institutionalist literature claiming that the rationalism of world culture poses challenges for religious forms of organizing (Boli and Thomas 1999, p. 43). Taken at face value, this argument suggests that religious NGOs promoting secular human rights missions, by either "toning down" or abandoning any evangelistic objectives, would have greater odds of obtaining IGO consultative status than would NGOs asserting explicitly religious objectives, since international institutions are overwhelming secular and rational.

However, a central, underlying premise of this dissertation is that the choice between "religious" and "secular" is, in many respects, a false choice, and that the mutual distinctiveness and incompatibility

of their logics have been overstated. In Chapter Three, we found that religious mobilization in human rights actually increased during a period of pronounced rationalization in the field. Chapter Four demonstrated that religious groups exert non-negligible influence in international institutions, even when scant evidence of their influence exists in the public documents that explicate the positions of international institutions on critical issues. The findings of these chapters suggested that secular institutions actually open opportunities for religious mobilization, just as they do for secular mobilization.

We cannot assume, however, that institutions embodying western principles would open opportunities equally for all religious groups, especially when we take into consideration the role of human rights institutions in arbitrating between individualist and collectivist claims pertaining to religious freedom. Western legal interpretations of religious freedom assume a pluralist religious market and frame religious freedom largely in individualist terms, emphasizing the rights of individuals to freely promote or change their religions. This interpretation stands in contrast to the collectivist interpretation, which emphasize issues of cultural survival and the protection of religious groups from proselytism. If, as historic institutionalists argue, international institutions structure organizational fields and markets in favor of their more powerful actors, we can expect to find a bias in favor of the model of religious freedom that permits the most powerful religious groups to successfully expand into new territories – or, to use the terms of religious economies scholars, to achieve greater market share.

To the extent that northern and Christian groups are more organizationally and economically equipped than others to compete internationally for converts, it is in their interest to promote the individualist religious rights framework. The converse is true for minority, and non-proselytizing religions (such as Judaism), whose interests lie more in cultural survival or, to use the language of economics, the protection of existing market share. Therefore, if a positive association exists between individualist religious frames and IGO consultative status, it should also account for variation in consultative status by religion.

To examine how both *secularism* and *individualism* might be associated with IGO ties, I collected information on religious NGOs' mission statements and program descriptions. I initially distinguished among five types of organizational missions that differ from one another in terms of their consistency with the principles of secularism and individualism. *Appendix B: What is a Religious NGO?* provides a detailed description of the typology that I created from this analysis. In the present chapter, however, I distinguish between three types of organizational frames that describe NGO missions: *secular*, *individualist* and *collectivist*.

*Secular human rights.* Religious NGOs coded as *secular* are no different from secular NGOs in terms of how they publicly frame their approaches to human rights. Their mission statements give no indication that they are involved in evangelism, and they make no distinctions regarding the religious preferences of either victims of human rights violations or the activists that their organizations

mobilize. If they focus on religious freedom, it is framed universally, without discrimination against or preference for any particular religion. According to the secularization thesis, we would expect these organizations to have significantly more favorable odds of obtaining consultative status than would organizations whose missions and activities are more explicitly framed as religious.

Pax Christi International is an example of an NGO that was coded as *Secular Human Rights*. Their mission statement reads in part as follows:

Pax Christi International is a non-profit, non-governmental Catholic peace movement that began in France at the end of World War II. Today, it is comprised of autonomous national sections, local groups, and affiliated organisations spread over 30 countries and 5 continents, with over 60,000 members worldwide. The movement works in all areas of peace but has a specific focus on demilitarisation, security and arms trade, development and human rights, and ecology.

Pax Christ International's work is based in spirituality. It is a Catholic organisation but welcomes all religious groups and strives for dialogue and co-operation with non-governmental organisations and movements working in the same field – Christian, Jewish, Muslim and non-religious.

*Individualism in Human Rights.* Organizations coded as *Individualist* explicitly indicate in their public documents that they engage in the *promotion or expansion of a particular religious tradition*, in addition to, or as a component of, their human rights mission. In many cases, these organizations include evangelism among their core missions. On the one hand, an *Individualist* frame is at odds with the secularism of world culture, in that it implies the promotion of religion as framework for defining the moral order. It is consistent, however, with the individualist interpretation of religious freedom as a human right, which emphasizes the rights of individuals to convert or seek converts. Hence, my choice of the label *Individualist*. An example of an NGO coded as *Individualist* is Catholics Against Capital Punishment, whose mission statement reads, in part:

Catholics Against Capital Punishment was founded in 1992 to promote greater awareness of Catholic Church teachings that characterize capital punishment as unnecessary, inappropriate and unacceptable in today's world. It does this in three ways:

- \* By disseminating news of Catholic-oriented anti-death penalty efforts through its newsletter, CACP News Notes, and this web site.

- \* By communicating the Church's teachings on the

issue to federal and state lawmakers, especially those who are Catholic, urging them to resist proposed legislation imposing or extending the use of the death penalty, and to work for repeal of such laws currently on the books.

\* By encouraging members of the Catholic hierarchy, clergy and religious groups to speak out more forcefully against capital punishment.

A second example is the Baptist World Alliance, whose “Who Are We?” web page reads:

The Baptist World Alliance unites Baptists worldwide, leads in evangelism, responds to people in need and defends human rights.

*Collectivism and Human Rights.* In contrast to *Individualism*, the category *Collectivism* includes organizations that explicitly work to protect their own religious group.<sup>7</sup> In important ways, collectivist NGO frames are at odds with world cultural discourse, since they emphasize group survival, including the right to protect a religious group from challenges posed by outsiders, as opposed to framing their

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<sup>7</sup> An NGO was not coded as *collectivist* if its goal was only cultural preservation in the form of historical societies, libraries or museums.



rights concerns in terms of individual freedoms. Action for Post-Soviet Jewry is an example of an NGO coded *Collectivist*. Their mission statement reads, in part, as follows:

Action for Post-Soviet Jewry, Inc. (APSJ) is a private, non-profit, human rights organization dedicated to helping Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU) as well as participating in general human rights work and humanitarian aid projects. APSJ was founded in 1975 in response to the struggle of Jews in the Soviet Union to emigrate and to live freely as Jews.

It is possible for a human rights organization to simultaneously promote individualist and collectivist frames. For example, Christian missionary organizations targeting human rights institutions to protect the rights of the “persecuted church” overseas can use an individualist/evangelist model in seeking protection, while simultaneously framing the need for protection specifically in terms of their own group. This would stand in contrast, for example, to a Jewish organization that is concerned with anti-Semitism, but has no interest in evangelism or any other attempts to proliferate Judaism. Since the possibility exists for organizations to combine individualist and collectivist frames, each *Mission* was treated separately and coded as a binary variable. That is, an organization may be coded as “yes” for both *Collectivist* and *Individualist* missions.

An organization was only coded “yes” for *Secular* mission, however, in cases where it was coded as “no” for both *Individualist* and *Collectivist* religious missions.

*Universalism and Political Neutrality.* It is well known in Human Rights that international institutions prefer NGOs that have broad geographical foci, since a broad geographical focus is assumed to indicate broad and diverse representation.<sup>8</sup> From the world polity perspective, the preference for organizations that frame their grievances in universal, rather than local or particular, terms can be interpreted as evidence of conformity to the world cultural principle of *universalism*.

An alternative, though equally normative, interpretation of this preference is that a broad human rights focus is valued because it signals *political neutrality*, which is actually derived from the norm of state sovereignty. In spite of academic claims that Human Rights pose a serious challenge to the norm of state sovereignty, NGOs seeking consultative status with major human rights institutions, including the UN and the EC, are required to frame their human rights grievances in general terms, without making statements that either support or oppose individual governments or political parties. For example, an NGO that targets slavery in the Sudan runs a higher risk of being labeled “political” than does an NGO targeting slavery in the Sudan and several other countries or, better yet, slavery “around the world,”

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<sup>8</sup> Beginning 1994, the United Nations made a verbal commitment to grant consultative status to national NGOs (see Willets 2000). However, the extent to which the United Nations has succeeded in honoring this commitment is debatable, and remains a point of contention among NGOs.

since the latter can frame their grievances in terms of the *practice* of slavery *in general*, as opposed to the *policies* of a particular government.

Consistent with the requirement of political neutrality toward states, NGOs with UN consultative status are discouraged from voicing pronounced opposition to the UN, and must show evidence that they actively and publicly support the UN's objectives (Willets 1996, p.4). NGOs which fail to provide such support, or are overtly critical of international institutions or powerful member states risk being labeled "political," as opposed to "neutral" or purely "technical" and, as a result, are threatened with the loss of their consultative status or financial support from key institutions (Pei-Heng 1981; Willets 1996, p 33).

The power of states to use the standard of political neutrality to marginalize, or at least neutralize, NGOs seeking access to international institutions presents a challenge to optimistic claims about NGO capacity to exert normative authority independently of states (Wapner 1995; Boli and Thomas 1999; Lipshutz 1999). While it may be true that INGOs can legally operate without state approval or backing, the norm of political neutrality suggests that the amount of influence they wield in institutional politics is considerably weakened should they choose to exercise their cultural authority by directly challenging states.<sup>9</sup> Because of its theoretical importance, my analysis seeks to measure each organization's *geographic focus* in a

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<sup>9</sup> The "Anti-NGO Movement" can be understood in this context as the most recent organized attempt assert control over NGOs and INGOs that stray from politically neutral positions. It is not clear, however, whether NGOs have become more political, or whether the definition of what constitutes a "political" claim has expanded to include a greater diversity of NGO claims and activities.

way that distinguishes between conformity to the principle of universalism and conformity to the principle of political neutrality.

The variable *Geographic Focus* (*Geo Focus*) measures whether an organization focuses on human rights violations nationally (in one country, but not necessarily the country out of which they operate), regionally, internationally or universally. A strictly national geographic focus indicates nonconformity with the criterion of *political neutrality*. At the other end of the spectrum, a universal focus indicates conformity to the principle of *universalism*. If political neutrality is the operative principle predicting IGO consultative status, nationally-focused organizations should have significantly lower odds of obtaining IGO ties when compared to organizations that focus on human rights violations internationally, regionally, and universally. But, if universalism is the operative principle, then only a universal focus will increase odds of obtaining consultative status relative to a national focus.

But we also need to consider the possibility that principles such as universalism and political neutrality primarily function to legitimate the distribution of structural power in favor of the larger and more established NGOs in the human rights field. To investigate this possibility, I created a set of variables that measure structural characteristics of organizations that serve as proxies for resource capacity and establishment within a transnational field: level of operations, membership, and age.

*Level of Operations.* The variable *Operations* measures whether an organization has offices or active membership nationally, regionally, or internationally. International organizations are those organizations whose membership spans beyond any particular region; they are more likely than regional organizations to be intercontinental. International organizations tend, on average to be larger than regional organizations, but this is not necessarily the case.<sup>10</sup>

*Membership.* While *Operations* is an indicator of geographic expansiveness, *Membership* measures the number of countries represented among an organization's members. *Membership* is a continuous variable.

*Age.*<sup>11</sup> The oldest NGO in my dataset is the Holy Trinity Fathers. The organization was founded in 1198, and even by today's standards, had a human rights mission, which was to ransom Christians and Muslims pressed into slavery during the Crusades. Today, the Holy Trinity Fathers remain a community of Catholic priests actively working to gain the release of religious prisoners. However, for most of the

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the mean and median membership for regional NGOs is 29 and 16 countries respectively, and the largest "regional" organization in the dataset has 101 countries represented among its members. The mean and median membership for international NGOs is 75 and 74 countries respectively, and the largest international NGO in the dataset has 170 countries represented among its members. However, the smallest regional organization in the dataset represents 10 countries, while the smallest international organization only represents 5.

<sup>11</sup> I initially collected information on both the age of each organization and the age of each organization's human rights program. However, the HRI *Directory* does not always distinguish between organizational foundings and human rights program foundings. In cases where an organization's directory entries and web pages made no mention of such a distinction, I coded the case as if the human rights program was founded in the same year as the organization. As a result, my measure of the age of each organization's human rights program was highly unreliable. Also, it was not significantly associated with the dependent variable when included in the regression models. For these reasons, I chose to use only the organizational age in the analyses that follow.

centuries-old organizations in the dataset, a human rights mission at the time of founding cannot be assumed, given that “human rights” as the concept is understood today did not then exist. The coefficients for *age* should be interpreted with this caveat in mind. That is, *age* measure how long an organization has existed, not necessarily how long it has been engaging in human rights activism.

If Hypotheses 1 and 2 are correct, variables measuring world cultural principles will not only be associated with consultative status; they will also explain regional and religious disparities in terms of IGO ties, thus implicating world culture in the reproduction of a stratified human rights field. If Hypotheses 3 and 4 are correct, the structural characteristics of organizations will not only predict consultative status, but will also account for relationships between consultative status and religion and region. If Hypothesis 5 is correct, and world cultural principles serve the function of stratifying organizations fields to the advantage of more powerful actors, the structural variables will also account for the relationship between world cultural principles and IGO ties.

### *Results*

Examining national diversity first, consistent with the concerns of many globalization scholars about northern biases operating among NGOs, we do find disproportionate northern NGO representation in international institutions [Table 5.4, Model 1]. NGOs with secretariats in the US and Western Europe have greater odds of achieving consultative status than do NGOs from Canada, Latin

America, Africa and Asia. Organizations from Switzerland and Belgium have greater odds of achieving consultative status than do those from the US and the rest of Europe. As discussed in the methods section, this finding comes as no surprise given that Belgium and Switzerland host the UN and EU-based international institutions. Religious NGOs based in the Middle East also have greater odds of achieving consultative status than do organizations from the North. This is difficult to interpret prior to examining more complex models. But, referring back to Table 5.1, it is noteworthy that only nine organizations in the dataset have secretariats in the Middle East. This low frequency of human rights mobilization might suggest a selection bias, wherein those Middle Eastern organizations that do mobilize around human rights in the first place are more likely to “buy into” the field’s underlying world cultural premises, and are therefore more likely to seek and obtain consultative status. Conversely, it may be the case that, in the Middle East, “world cultural” premises lack sufficient resonance to result in widespread mobilization around human rights as it is constructed in the core institutions of the field.

Before adding religion to the model, it is helpful to look back to Figure 5.1, which compares the frequency of consultative status by religion to the proportion of the global population represented within each religious tradition. As the cross tabulation in Table 5.3 confirms, Catholic, non-Catholic Christian and Jewish organization

Table 5.4 Binomial Logistic Regression: IGO Consultative Status as of 2000.

Independent Variables	(1) N=539	(2) N=511	(3) N=432	(4) N=432	(5) N=392	(6) N=328	(7) N=215	(8) N=223
B-term Constant	-.815*** (.153)	.062 (.240)	.219 (.260)	-.180 (.284)	-1.236 (.431)	-1.004** (.482)	-.932 (.680)	-.474 (.834)
<i>Secretariat<sup>a</sup></i>								
Canada	-1.131** (.556)	-1.13798** (.574)	-1.232** (.585)	-1.332** (.603)	-1.167 (.636)	-.811 (.678)	-.501 (.871)	-1.245 (1.065)
Swiss/Belg	1.826*** (.440)	1.683*** (.465)	1.758*** (.515)	1.825*** (.542)	1.629*** (.571)	1.320** (.628)	1.366 (1.269)	-3.214 (2.320)
Latin America	-.736** (.331)	-1.057*** (.61)	-1.046*** (.389)	-1.191*** (.394)	-.274 (.491)	-.341 (.568)	-.288 (.718)	-1.546 (.931)
Africa	-.715** (.342)	-.554 (.365)	-.838** (.417)	-.972** (.431)	-.018 (.491)	-.285 (.578)	.230 (.748)	-.831 (.995)
Middle East	1.508** (.723)	1.727** (.775)	1.967** (.908)	1.571 (.918)	1.914** (.983)	2.362 (1.364)	12.744 (53.353)	4.359 (113.558)
East Asia	-1.142*** (.153)	-1.384*** (.346)	-1.340*** (.373)	-1.624*** (.392)	-1.022** (.482)	-.932 (.528)	-.650 (.713)	-1.836 (.969)
<i>Religion<sup>b</sup></i>								
NonCath Xtian		-1.252*** (.264)	-1.081*** (.281)	-1.112*** (.292)	-1.015*** (.315)	-1.338*** (.367)	-2.411*** (.556)	-2.683*** (.643)
Jewish		-1.001** (.471)	-.946 (.516)	-.188 (.572)	-.095 (.651)	-.192 (.715)	-1.364 (1.145)	-1.078 (1.366)
Muslim		-1.270** (.597)	-1.206 (.644)	-1.022 (.704)	-1.016 (.754)	-1.630** (.824)	-8.367 (30.449)	-9.627 (90.740)
Interfaith		-.764 (.492)	-.461 (.507)	-.289 (.515)	-.581 (.605)	-.969 (.689)	-3.018*** (1.155)	-12.566** (6.221)
Other		.077 (.490)	.525 (.598)	.668 (.638)	1.107 (.795)	.630 (.871)	-1.050 (1.192)	-1.849 (2.425)



Table 5.4 (continued)

<i>Secular Mission</i>	-.502 (.276)	-----	-----	-----		-----		
<i>Individualist Mission</i>		1.189*** (.263)	1.287*** (.288)	1.212*** (.871)	1.301*** (.501)	1.740*** (.617)		
<i>Collectivist Mission</i>		-1.011** (.411)	-.864 (.454)	-.953** (.488)	-1.181 (.805)	-1.723 (.976)		
<i>Geo Focus<sup>c</sup></i>								
Regional			.421 (.792)	-.235 (.856)		-.007 (1.552)		
International			.244 (.395)	-.209 (.515)		-.667 (.859)		
Universal			1.348*** (.403)	.747 (.461)		-.433 (.821)		
<i>Operations<sup>d</sup></i>								
Regional				1.028*** (.384)	1.824** (.875)	-.555 (1.379)		
International				1.408** (.631)	1.740** (.821)	-.433 (1.748)		
<i>Membership</i>					.046** (.020)	.606*** (.231)		
<i>Age</i>					.012 (.009)	.013 (.011)		
Nagelkerke R Square	R <sup>2</sup> = .156	R <sup>2</sup> = .221	R <sup>2</sup> = .252	R <sup>2</sup> = .323	R <sup>2</sup> = .344	R <sup>2</sup> = .401	R <sup>2</sup> = .661	R <sup>2</sup> = .734

a. Reference category is "USA/Europe"

b. Reference category is "Catholic"

c. Reference Category is "National"

d. Reference Category is "National"

\*\* p &lt; .05; \*\*\*p &lt; .001

are disproportionately represented in international institutions. However, we also know, from Table 5.2, that mobilization in human rights is disproportionate across these same categories. In effect, some of the disproportion in consultative status may be attributable to a lack of mobilization, not due to an institutional bias operating among organizations that have succeeded in mobilizing.

Nonetheless, if we compare consultative status to the proportion of existing human rights NGOs [Table 5.4, Model 2], we still find inequality in terms of institutional access. However, the patterns do not break down neatly across western/nonwestern religious lines. The comparison category is “Catholic,” and the analysis reveals that Catholicism is significantly associated with increased odds of obtaining consultative status relative to Jews, Muslims and non-Catholic Christians, but not relative to interfaith organizations or “Others.” Since consultative status and religious tradition are not associated in a way that breaks down neatly across West/non-West lines, something more than a straightforward “western” bias must be at work, and the key to understanding it lies in the difference between Catholic and non-Catholic NGOs.

After adding religious affiliation to the model, the differences between “Africa” and “USA/Europe” are no longer significant, perhaps suggesting that a disproportionate number of non-Catholic NGOs have secretariats in Africa.

The first variables added to the model to explain variation by region and religion were the *Mission* variables, which indicate whether or not organizations frame their missions in ways that were consistent

with world cultural principles. Model 3 examines the influence of secular organizational frames on consultative status. Model 4 examines the influences of adopting either individualist or collectivist models of religious freedom. As Table 5.4 illustrates, a secularist frame does not introduce any advantages or disadvantages in terms of consultative status. In other words, we can reject the hypothesis that secularism is positively associated with organizational legitimacy within the world polity. Both the individualist and collectivist religious frames, however, are predictive.

The individualist frame is positively associated with IGO consultative status. Religious NGOs that explicitly describe the expansion of their religious beliefs or traditions as amongst their goals (e.g. through evangelism or religious education) have greater odds of obtaining consultative status than organizations that do not. This finding suggests that religious participation in international institutions does not dilute the evangelistic content of organizational missions. In contrast, NGOs that express a more defensive posture, and seek to protect the rights of their own religious groups (i.e. use the collectivist frame) have significantly decreased odds of obtaining consultative status.

In terms of their implications for NGO stratification in the human rights field, the results when we include the *Mission* variables suggest that the cultural rights of collectives are subordinate to the rights of individuals to freely convert or seek converts. Furthermore, the *Mission* variables do account for some of the inequality by religion, specifically the proportionally lower odds of both Jewish and

Muslim NGOs having consultative status relative to Catholics. This makes sense when we consider the competing interpretations of religious freedom in light of the interests of both groups. For Jews, the combination of not seeking converts and battling a history of anti-Semitism explains why their human rights programs would more often give priority to the protection of their own group; they have little interest in framing their human rights initiatives in ways that protect the freedom to evangelize. Although Muslims do seek converts, many of their rights groups assume a defensive posture when it comes to religious freedom, emphasizing protection from outside (usually western) cultural intrusions, or from other forms of “Islamaphobia” and discrimination. The finding that collectivist groups are significantly less prevalent in international institutions than groups that have evangelizing missions raises questions about the types of religious groups that find their interests served by international institutions, especially when we think in terms of the capacity of institutions to structure markets in favor of more powerful actors.

The other variable measuring the influence of world cultural principles is *Geographic Focus*, which measures NGO consistency with the norms of *universalism* and *political neutrality*. Model 5 reveals that only organizations with universal focuses have greater odds of achieving consultative status than do nationally focused organizations. The fact that there are no statistically significant differences between nationally, regionally and internationally focused organizations suggests that consultative status is predicted more by the advantages of universalism than by the disadvantages of strictly

national orientations (or rejection of the principle of *political neutrality*).

Of greater analytic importance, however, *Geographic Focus* explains some of the variation in IGO consultative status by region. Canadian, Latin American, and African organizations are no longer at a disadvantage relative to American and European NGOs after adding taking into account the geographic foci of each NGO. Not surprisingly, Model 5 also reveals a relationship between geographic focus and a collectivist mission, suggesting that NGOs that focus on rights for particular groups tend to have narrower regional foci.

This brings us to the next question – that of the extent to which the framing variables are important in and of themselves versus their importance due to their interactions with variables indicating organizational resource capacity. For instance, the correlation matrix in Table 5.5 illustrates that *Geographic Focus* is significantly correlated with structural variables that measure NGO membership size, expansiveness of operations, and age. These correlations raise questions about whether organizations with universal foci are favored because of their principles or because of their size and the embeddedness within the organizational field that presumably comes with age, as described in Chapter Four.

To explore this question about the relationship between principles and measures of organizational structure, Models 6 through 8 examine the influence of the structural variables on IGO consultative status. Model 6 reveals that *Operations* is not only significant, but also accounts for the association between *Geographic*

Table 5.5 Pearson Correlation: Geographic Focus X  
Level of Operations X Membership Size X Age of NGO.

	Geographic Focus	Level of Operations	Member- ship Size	Age of NGO
Geographic Focus	1.000	--	--	--
Level of Operations	.482**	1.000	--	--
Member- ship Size	.477**	.552**	1.000	--
Age of NGO	.221**	.120*	.369**	1.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Sources: Human Rights Internet and the Yearbook of  
International Organizations.

*Focus* and IGO ties. Furthermore, if we drop *Geographic Focus* from the model, and add the structural variables *Membership* and *Age* (Model 7),<sup>12</sup> the Nagelkerke R square increases from .401 to .661. Examining the coefficients, the age of an organization does not significantly increase or decrease the odds of obtaining consultative status, but the membership size does.

Equally important, all of the variation by region is accounted for with the addition of the structural variables. Whereas variation in consultative status by religion is influenced by the consistency of organizational missions with world cultural principles, north/south inequality is more a function resources, if we allow that organizational size and expansiveness are suitable proxies for resource capacity. However, it is also the case that the two types of variables (cultural and structural) are related, as is evident from the relationships among organizations' geographic foci, expansiveness of operations and collectivist frames.

Interestingly, the decreased odds of interfaith organizations having consultative status become significant once we control for organizational size, expansiveness and age. This finding suggests that the large membership and geographical expansiveness of interfaith organizations are the characteristics that allow them to "keep up" with Catholics in terms of representation in international institutions. In

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<sup>12</sup> In Model 7, due to missing data on the variables added to the model, the number of NGOs with Middle Eastern secretariats drops to 4, and the number of Muslim organizations drops to 9. In Model 8, the numbers of Middle Eastern and Muslim NGOs drop to 2 and 7 respectively. These low numbers probably account for the high standard errors for these categories, and should be taken into account when interpreting the coefficients.

the absence of such characteristics, interfaith organizations are at a disadvantage.

Model 8 reintroduces the variable *geographic focus*. Although this variable does not show a significant relationship with consultative status, it does improve the fit of the model, increasing the Nagelkerke R Square from .661 to .734. The fact that of the variables *Geographic Focus*, *Level of Operations*, *Membership*, and *Age*, only one of them is significant when all are included in the model is probably a function of the high correlation among them (Table 5.6).

In terms of a final model, the variables *Individualist Mission*, *Level of Operations* and *Membership* account for *most* of the variation by region and religion. Only the advantage of Catholics over non-Catholic Christians and Interfaith Organizations remains to be explained. Indeed, there is something about Catholicism that gives it an advantage in terms of international institutional representation - something that is not accounted for in terms of organizational size or mission.

Many authors have already written about the unique structure of Catholicism and the relative advantages that structure affords Catholic actors in their transnational operations (Meyer 1991; Casanova 1994; Voye 1999; Della Cava 2001; Warner and Wenner 2002). Chapters Two and Four of this dissertation also discussed these advantages. Through centuries of missionary activity supported by northern states, the Vatican developed organizational networks that more densely span a larger transnational territory than do those of other religious traditions, and, equally important, are centralized and hierarchical.



These characteristics allow for more efficient coordination and resource-sharing among Catholic NGOs (Della Cava 2001; Warner and Wenner 2002), as well as internationally recognized and legitimated representation vis-à-vis states and international institutions (Voye 1999; Della Cava 2001). In Human Rights, it may be the case that individual Catholic organizations lacking the large, expansive structures that facilitate consultative status nonetheless benefit from their ties to the Church and subsequently the resources and legitimacy that such ties confer.

In contrast, non-Catholic religious NGOs, lacking ties to comparably dense, coordinated, and politically entrenched international networks must build larger organizations and resource capacity on an organization by organization basis. This would explain, for one, the variation in institutional access between Catholic and non-Catholic Christian human rights organizations, insofar as the latter are organized like a market rather than a hierarchy. At the same time, this argument sheds light on the relative lack of human rights mobilization within non-Judeo-Christian religious traditions (Table 5.2). In the absence of ties to powerful northern states on the one hand, and centrally coordinated resource networks on the other, they may simply lack the power needed to mobilize in conformity with the organizational forms legitimated by international institutions. As Model 2 revealed, “Others” are not at a disadvantage compared to Catholics when they do manage to form NGOs, but their numbers of NGOs are so small as to leave them significantly under-represented in international institutions all the same (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Given

this chapter's findings, further analysis of religious institutional representation might productively begin with a focus on how the inter-organizational ties within religious networks variably influence structural power for individual NGOs within organizational fields.

### *Conclusion*

Just as legitimacy is required for the successful construction of nation-states, legitimacy is required in the construction of international institutions. Combined with the bargaining power of religious groups with resource-rich global networks, this need for legitimacy is creating new spaces and opportunities for religious influence. But some religious groups are better positioned to take advantage of these opening opportunities than are others. Specifically, religious groups that have been historically tied to the most powerful states have considerably greater involvement with international institutions than groups that have been historically associated with the global periphery. In other words, the cultural terrain of the transnational human rights sector is not only heterogeneous; it is stratified according to both region and religion.

We cannot rush to the conclusion, however, that under-representation of Southern and non-Western religious groups is due to rejection of minority groups' applications for consultative status. It is very likely that under-representation is also due to self-selection on the parts of the some NGOs, either due to lack of information, insufficient resource capacity to mobilize or benefit from consultative status, or concerns about a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of

constituents that view northern dominated institutions with suspicion. But even these scenarios raise the issue of power. Particularly, they raise questions about how the costs and benefits of conformity to institutional rules, and to world culture more generally, might vary by region and religious tradition.

For example, in this study, we found that overtly religious organizational frames do not hinder, but actually assist, some types of religious activists seeking influence in human rights. Specifically, organizations that explicitly state an intention to spread the teachings of their religions have greater odds of obtaining consultative status than those NGOs that do not. In contrast, organizations that explicitly endorse the protection of their cultures from perceived threats to the group as a whole have disproportionately lower odds of obtaining consultative status. This order of preference is rooted in a predominantly western model of religious freedom that gives priority to the rights of individuals to freely profess their beliefs in public. In spite of the many virtues of this individualist framework, at its core, it is an endorsement of the “free market” model of religious transformation. Catholics, given their resources and entrenchment around the globe have little to fear from competition in a free religious market. In fact, endorsement of an individualist model of religious freedom is likely to work to the Church’s, and many Christian organizations,’ advantage, insofar as it justifies the opening of previously closed religious markets.

In contrast, non-Christians not only lack the resource capacity and level of coordination needed to compete as equals in open

religious markets, their ability to protect their “market share” is inhibited by an institutionally embedded certification process. First, groups vary by religion in terms of their capacity to enact the egalitarian standard of universalism. Second, the endorsement of an individualist model of religious freedom can work against their interests. A striking contradiction lies in the fact that the organizational standards valued as indicators of world citizenship and equality within individual NGOs produce an organization field that, when considered as a whole, is marked by substantial inequality and northern dominance in terms of institutional access. Ironically, egalitarian principles and inegalitarian interorganizational relations not only co-exist within the same field, they work to mutually reinforce one another.

In “Conceptions of Christendom: Notes on the Distinctiveness of the West,” John Meyer (1991) elaborated how Christian religion provided the structural foundation for the emergence of world culture. The point of this chapter has been to illustrate how the enduring organizational compatibility of Christian (especially Catholic) religion with the structure of the international system still matters in terms of stratification among religious groups. I illustrated this for one field of transnational action – human rights. The final chapter of this dissertation will discuss, among other things, the implications of these findings, and a discussion about the future of religion in global politics, and of politics in global religion.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

This chapter will summarize the research reported in the preceding chapters, elaborate upon its theoretical contributions, and suggest avenues for future research on religion in transnational politics. I will argue two general points. First, in order to accurately assess the role that religion plays in transnational politics, we will need to reconsider the relationship between sacred and secular in the context of modernity. In terms of movements for social change, this reassessment will require that we more carefully consider how modernization actually provides opportunities for religious mobilization. In terms of institutional politics, we need to search for mechanisms through which religious and secular authority continue to support one another, in spite of institutional differentiation. Second, I will argue that institutionalist accounts of world culture will benefit from more explicit attention to the role that action plays, not only in social change, but also in institutional reproduction. Although scholars usually study social movements in order to understand social change, by turning our attention to action and strategy, the study of social movements can also bring to light the more dynamic processes through which social structure is maintained.

I will also examine some of the limitations of this dissertation, especially the inadequacy of the evidence for making longitudinal causal claims, and some ambiguity that remains regarding the role of agency in producing stratification in Human Rights. Although both of these weaknesses are important, I view them as neither detracting

from the findings that do emerge from this project, nor as indicative of “dead ends” in terms of research on the questions that it raises. Rather, they indicate a need, and opportunity, for further research on religion in global politics - research that takes into consideration additional dimensions of movement fields, institutions, and the parties that interact within them.

### *Public Religion and Secular Institutions*

Chapters Two and Three speak most directly to questions about secularization, and the relationship between rationalism and public religion in Human Rights. They do so by examining religious NGOs foundings over the past century, and the strategies religious human rights NGOs use to assert claims across culturally diverse contexts. Before interpreting the findings from these chapters, however, I will clarify some limitations of the quantitative data that were used as evidence.

The most serious limitation of the data is that they are not sufficient to support causal claims about organizational change over time. Chapter Two does show an impressive coincidence of IGO formation and religious NGO foundings. However, this relationship, in and of itself, is not sufficient evidence that religious NGO foundings are caused by, or occur in response to, the construction of international institutions; nor does it tell us that institution building occurs in response to NGO mobilization. It is also possible that the increases in foundings were caused by different factors for each group, or that organizational foundings were enabled by some

additional underlying variable that had a positive relationship with both IGOs and religious NGOs.

One such variable, and the one that world polity institutionalists would stress, is the transnational proliferation of rationalist modes of organizing. From this perspective, both IGO and NGO construction can be interpreted as the isomorphic enactment and embedding of world cultural principles. This interpretation is rooted in assumptions that sociology inherited from the classical account of modernization, which constructs rationalism as linear, progressive, and destined to exert an organizing influence over greater territory and over more sectors of social life with the passing of time. Given the rationalization of the Human Rights sector (as described in the Introduction), this modernist account of societal transformation would seem to be an appropriate framework for understanding the sector's evolution and the types of actors that comprise it.

There are, however, some problems with the institutionalist-modernist account of societal transformation. First, rationalism, from this perspective, is also assumed to be a secularizing process, meaning that it should be associated with a decline in public religion. In addition, it takes for granted a considerable degree of homogeneity across organizations and across levels of analysis. As we found in Chapter Two, neither secularism nor homogeneity can be assumed in Human Rights, since all of the foundings that we observe in this study are, in fact, foundings of religious organizations. Furthermore, they are religious organizations that are explicitly and openly oriented toward influencing the public sphere of the world polity. This pattern

is inconsistent with the classical modernization narrative, for which religious decline is of central importance. Rather than revealing an adverse impact of modernization on religion, the dramatic increase in religious NGO foundings since mid-century suggests that the rationalization of Human Rights, along with espousal and enactment of enlightenment principles within the field, is at least positively associated with public religion; it may have even opened opportunities for religious NGO formation.

Several implications follow from these findings. First, they require that we abandon certain assumptions about the homogenizing force of modernity. My research lends strong support to claims that modernity actually creates the conditions for the emergence of movements based on ascriptive identities - identities that challenge processes such as secularization, Westernization or globalization<sup>1</sup> However, whereas previous challenges to modernization theory have focused on identity formation, I have focused on actual mechanisms through which actors with religious identities strategically use rationalism to their advantage. The NGO tactics that I describe in Chapter Three - procedural rationalism and discursive secularization – are two such mechanisms. By focusing on how NGOs strategically frame grievances and inter-organizational communications across religious and secular contexts, I have identified two relational mechanisms<sup>2</sup> through which the sacred and the secular meet, and subsequently come to mutually constitute one another. These tactics

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example Polanyi 1957, and more recently, Hardt and Negri, 2000; Adelman 2000; Barber 1995; Castells 2004; Appaduri 1990.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of relational mechanisms, see McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 201., p. 26.



illustrate the malleability of instrumental rationalism, as a tool that can be used to support any number of ends, religious or secular.

If we cannot assume a positive relationship between means and ends rationalism, neither can we assume that religious groups' incorporation of secular discourses and concepts indicates religious decline. Religious NGO mission statements certainly utilize the language and philosophical framework of Human Rights. Although this incorporation may constitute an internal religious transformation, just as secular human rights has transformed through time, it does not necessarily indicate secularization. As Swatos and Christiano point out, "change [is] *inherent* in religion, just as change is in other institutional spheres and cultural dimensions, precisely because religion is a sociocultural institution" (Swatos and Christiano 2000, p. 16). Religion, like any institution, is most usefully conceptualized as continually evolving throughout history, and any decline in religious authority as a result of that evolutionary process should not be assumed, but left open for investigation (Edgell 2002, p.29; Hefner 2001, p.493; Kurtz 1986).

Since religion and rationalism cannot be assumed to be opposing logics, conceptual and methodological distinctions between religious and secular practice may actually obscure, rather than illuminate, the relationship between religion and the public sphere. A second implication of this research, then, is that we need to broaden our definition of religious practice. Information about individuals' church attendance and privatized spirituality tells us much about certain dimensions of religiosity. But it is insufficient if we want to obtain a

more complete picture of religious life. Once we take into account individuals' subjective interpretations of social action, we find that the boundaries between religious and secular practices are not as self-evident as implied by standard aggregate measures of religiosity (e.g. frequency of prayer, worship service attendance, contributions to religious organizations). By extension, if we relax *a priori* assumptions of separate spheres for religious and public life, we can uncover forms of religious practice that are often overlooked in quantitative studies of religious transformation. Even domains of action like Human Rights, which presents as an ideal-typical embodiment of secular enlightenment values, can actually be the sites of religious engagement – fields through which religious actors play out the tenets of their faiths.

A third and related implication is that, in order to understand religious participation in the public sphere, we must distinguish among different levels of discursive engagement within civil society, especially when that civil society is transnational or global. The pluralist IGOs that human rights advocates target indeed produce and enact secular definitions of reality. And, the consistent elaboration of homogenous human rights principles within official transnational documents and speeches gives the impression of universal agreement. If we assume that this discourse is representative of the field in its entirety, we certainly find evidence of a homogenizing cultural force that erases particularities along religious and ethnic lines.

But the secular principles expressed through international institutions are not necessarily isomorphic with the core principles

that inform or inspire organizational and individual advocacy. The religious-to-secular translation process described by the interfaith NGO director (Chapter Three) serves as one illustration of this variation across contexts. It illuminates a disjuncture between the religious identities that provide the basis for the NGO's inter-group alliance and the secular frames that the NGO uses in its outward communications. By analytically attending to such distinctions across arenas of discourse, we identify points of resistance to, or at least differentiation from, official public discourses. We even find evidence that challenges us to rethink how hegemonic a particular discourse really is. In fact, the heterogeneity of cultural forms that we observe when we move to the organizational and individual levels of analysis suggests that the "world culture" enacted in international institutions may actually be an elite sub-culture – one that may or may not be internalized by the actors who organize around it.

But the heterogeneity that I have described cannot be fully ascertained in models of organizational and institutional behavior that view agents as merely *enactors* of pre-established world cultural principles. The durability of the homogenous world culture that researchers observe is actually maintained through the *strategic action* of culturally heterogeneous agents that vary considerably in terms of their level of agreement with the values endorsed by IGOs. The tactical shifts in language that we observe as groups move away from intraorganizational communication and toward more pluralist forums of interorganizational engagement are better understood with the incorporation of conceptions of culture as more of a "tool kit," and

organizational framing as more a process of “bricolage” or “theorization” (Swidler 1986; Tarrow 1994: 130; Strang 1993). Rather than merely enacting complete and coherent sets of principles and norms consistently and in their entirety, NGOs strategically select and weave together diverse symbols and cultural references from multiple sources, religious and secular.

I refer to tactical shifts toward secular discourse as *discursive secularization*. Discursive secularization is an instance of Snow and Benford call “frame bridging,” which is the process through which social movement activists create links, or bridges, among diverse groups, by translating platforms into discursive frames that will resonate across contexts (Snow et al. 1997: 238-239). Consistent with developments in secularization theory that have lead to distinctions among multiple forms of secularization, I view discursive secularization as a potentially autonomous process whose relationship to other forms of secularization cannot be assumed, and must be treated as an empirical question. That is, discursive secularization is not necessarily coterminous with privatization or a decline in religious beliefs and practices, nor does it imply religion’s retreat from the public sphere. Rather, it is a deliberate tactic used by religious actors used to exert greater influence in the public sphere. Therefore, when religious organizations transform their frames in order to build bridges with secular groups, it is more likely to be an indicator of religious assertion rather than decline.

However, in the process of asserting themselves, religious actors do nonetheless discursively strengthen the secular norms and

assumptions embodied in the institutions and organizational fields where they interact. Institutional durability, then, is as much the outcome of conflict and challenge as it is an outcome of legitimacy and conformity. This brings us to the importance of social movements for the sociological study of institutions. A sharper focus on the tactics and strategies used by institutional challengers forces us to specify of the role that action plays not only in institutional change, but in institutional reproduction as well. By examining religious NGO's discursive strategies, I have shown that religious actors relate to world culture through *action*, as opposed to *enaction*, through *challenge*, rather than *conformity*. This shift in the conceptualization of agency moves world polity institutionalism in a direction where it can account for and incorporate heterogeneity and conflict in studies of organizational environments that are otherwise characterized by isomorphism and homogeneity.

Looking beyond the findings of this project, I would predict that, if we were to examine the use of discursive secularization over time, we would find that it increases or decreases along with transformations in political opportunity structures, both domestic and international. For example, the Religious Right in American politics currently has scant need of discursive secularization, since it has strong supporters in all branches of U.S. government. Given that support, I would predict that religious activists' discourse will increasingly sacralize for as long as those alliances remain in place and in power. Should alliances or elite configurations shift in such a way as to close opportunities for the Religious Right, the latter may

retrench, but only on the surface, or in terms of the face of their movement. That is, through discursive secularization, movements can maintain their religious bases while engaging in the frame transformation necessary to create an aura of legitimacy in more secular contexts.

Having moved cultural heterogeneity and action to the forefront of institutional analysis, we arrive at questions about competing world cultural principles, and the mechanisms through which some remain subordinate to others. The next section will address these questions, along with the important contributions that Chapter Four makes to answering them. It is at this point that structure, as opposed to agency, becomes more important to my analysis.

*Accreditation, Inequality, and World Culture.*

Chapter Four systematically investigated the characteristics that distinguish between accredited and non-accredited NGOs, revealing several ways that NGO structure is related to IGO ties. My findings pertaining to this association are important for two reasons. First, they confirm the existence of institutional inequality in global civil society. Second, they illustrate that the sources of that inequality are both material and cultural. Before elaborating upon the implications of these findings, however, it will be instructive to discuss important limitations of the data used for that chapter.

The most serious problem with the data used in Chapter Four is that they are cross-sectional. Therefore, they are inadequate to the task of showing that access to international institutions, or the desire

for access, *causes* NGOs to innovate or adopt particular types of structures or missions. This, ideally, is what I would like to have shown. To demonstrate such a causal relationship, however, would require information on organizational frames over time, and the demonstration of frame variation within organizations, either preceding or shortly after obtaining IGO consultative status. The creation of an aggregated data set that contained such information on each individual organization would be a daunting, perhaps even impossible, task.

A promising alternative, however, would be to conduct organizational life histories focused on frame and mission transformations in a small number of religious organizations across time.<sup>3</sup> Such organizational life histories could provide valuable information about whether or not the desire for or acquisition of consultative status, or the mere presence of an accrediting body within an organizational field, provides an impetus for frame transformation within NGOs. Such historical case studies, in combination with the quantitative research I conducted for Chapter Four, would provide a more complete picture of the opportunities and incentives religious NGOs take into account when deciding to adopt, discard, or transform elements of their organizational missions and operations.

A second problem with the data is that it does not tell us whether exclusion from international institutions is the result of disenfranchisement or strategic choice on the part of NGOs without IGO ties. My fieldwork did allow for some speculation regarding this

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Meyer Zald's (1970) study of the YMCA.

question, since two of the NGOs whose leaders that I interviewed did not have IGO consultative status. In both of those cases, the advocates with whom I spoke clearly expressed the perception of disenfranchisement, and intentional exclusion at the behest of powerful players in the human rights field, including governments. Yet, it cannot be assumed that this was the case for all of the religious NGOs in my dataset that did not have consultative status. It is also possible that many of them are simply not interested in IGO accreditation.

To ascertain the reasons for NGO non-participation in IGOs, one potentially useful extension of this research would be to actually observe the accreditation process. Such an observation would reveal how and when overt exertions of state power influence decisions about consultative status. For example, members of a Sikh organization concerned with human rights in India reported that, each time they have applied for UN consultative status, a representative of India has blocked their accreditation. Observance of the accreditation process would reveal just how widespread such occurrences are.

Observation of the accreditation process would also allow for greater insight into the more subtle influences that procedures and standards exert on NGO accreditation, including the standards that I attempt to measure in Chapter Four. Are these standards explicitly evoked, or are they implicit in other criteria? How consistently are they applied? How much agreement or conflict exists regarding their appropriateness as criteria?



As useful as they might be, the insights gleaned from observing the accreditation process would only apply to NGOs that apply for consultative status and are denied. They would not tell us much about those religious human rights NGOs that never apply for consultative status in the first place. In order to understand the variables underlying self-selection, a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews focused specifically on NGOs without consultative status would be valuable.

I would not predict, however, that the findings of such a study would seriously challenge my claim that NGO accreditation is a discriminatory process. Even if we found that a large portion of the variation in accreditation was due to self-selection, given the importance of IGOs to Human Rights advocacy (see Introduction), I would predict that the reasons for opting out of consultative status would still point us in the direction of a systematic institutional bias.

For instance, we know from Chapter Four that IGO certification is, in part, a function of organizational size. Even if this variation were not due to IGO decisions and preferences, we would still need to ask: Why is there a tendency for smaller NGOs to not seek consultative status? I would predict that one common answer to this question would be that smaller organizations forgo consultative status because they lack the resources needed to benefit from it. These resources might include facility with dominant languages, money for international travel, or the extra time and material and human resources needed to publicly promote the UN, an activity that is required of accredited NGOs. Likewise, the expectation that

accredited NGOs advance universal rights claims might mean that already scarce NGO resources would have to be diverted from programs addressing pressing problems in NGO's own countries. For these types of reasons, IGO consultative status may be perceived by smaller organizations as a luxury that is useful primarily to organizations with large budgets and relatively secure human rights environments at home.

An additional reason why a religious NGO might strategically opt out of consultative status would be to avoid tensions that emerge as a result of the need to maintain legitimacy with multiple, opposing audiences. This issue is pertinent to religious minority groups, particularly those that are targeted for repression by governments. Under such circumstances, financial support from outside, especially government, sources can damage a human rights NGO's credibility in the eyes of its grassroots constituencies. As a result, NGOs leaders representing oppressed groups must make a choice between accepting support that might allow for outside influence (real or perceived), thereby threatening their legitimacy, or maintaining their autonomy, but surviving solely on resources of their membership.<sup>4</sup> To a certain extent, all human rights NGOs are faced with the choice between resources and operational independence. But, the stakes are arguably higher for organizations that represent groups that perceive their interests, or their very culture, to be threatened by governments or northern-based agents of globalization such as corporations, INGOs and IGOs.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with spokesperson for minority a religious NGO. September 2000.

Although these are examples of situations in which NGOs might freely and rationally choose to forgo IGO consultative status, they nonetheless reveal how power and inequality influence those choices. They force us to ask questions about whose interests are best served by international institutions, and whether the compromises that institutional affiliation requires are distributed equally across culturally diverse groups with uneven resource capacities. These questions in turn provoke other questions about just how far below the surface cultural principles such as universalism and world citizenship do or do not extend, bringing us to the issue of principles, power and the institutionalization of NGO inequality.

Although the evidence presented in Chapter Four cannot be used to make causal claims about IGO-NGO transformation, it does illustrate the current balance of institutional power among religious NGOs in Human Rights. It shows that differences in power are systematically associated with both region and religion, with northern and Christian (especially Catholic) groups enjoying a distinct advantage when it comes to obtaining IGO consultative status. This pattern of NGO stratification is consistent with patterns of stratification among states in the international system, with those from the north and historically western cultures holding positions of economic and political power over those located in the global south.

My findings pertaining to variation in consultative status by region will be of considerable importance to globally focused advocates and scholars committed to social justice. Although the existence of north-south inequality, in and of itself, will certainly not

come as a surprise, the identification of a potentially generalizable mechanism explaining the persistence of this inequality is noteworthy. It shows that power in international institutions does not operate exclusively through the purposive actions of northern actors seeking to dominate the south. Rather, power also works in more subtle ways, flowing through the ostensibly neutral standards that structure NGO participation, even when those standards are intended to produce the egalitarian outcomes to which many advocates are committed.

It is important to recognize that the standards favoring large, northern NGOs are neither straightforward nor explicit. Rather, they work through cultural legitimations. Official discourses do not describe large NGOs as preferable because of their size *per se*, but because of what size is assumed to represent – a broad, universal focus and a technical capacity that is consistent with the myth of the United Nations, and other IGOs, as apolitical institutions. Accreditation, then, creates a context where world cultural principles and power mutually reinforce one another, thereby reproducing stratification among distinct categories of actors. Paradoxically, the institutionalization of principles that are intended to guarantee equality of representation within individual human rights organizations produces inequality at the field level of analysis.

This mechanism operates in a similar way for religion as it does for region. In spite of the fact that international institutions assume secularism in their Human Rights instruments, and in spite of the fact that they do not explicitly value any one religion over another, their institutional rules are based on cultural assumptions that by and large

favor Christian religion over other religious traditions. Key advantages lie in the discursive and philosophical similarities between Christian religion and world culture, especially the priority that each give to an individualist, “market” model of spirituality that emphasizes the rights to evangelism and conversion.

But equally important are the size and expansiveness of Christian organizations. Organizational size interacts with the cultural principles measured in Chapter Four in two ways. First, globally expansive religious organizations stand to benefit more from individualist interpretations of religious freedom than do smaller religious organizations, since the former will have an advantage over the latter when it comes to competing for adherents in an open religious market. Second, expansive infrastructures and operations allow religious organizations to legitimately claim broad representation and universal human rights agendas. The two types of advantages – cultural and structural – mutually condition one another.

The relationship of both culture and structure to stratification speaks to how important it will be for scholars of world culture to incorporate elements of both the “old” and the “new” institutionalism into their theoretical framework if they wish to understand the relationship between world culture and inequality. Consistent with the old institutionalism, the impact of certification on regional and religious stratification suggests that state institutions (in this case international institutions) do indeed structure organizational fields to the advantage of their more powerful actors. At the same time, in keeping with the new institutionalist emphasis on culture, it shows

that material resources are not the only components of organizational structure that are predictive of institutional power. In addition, conformity to an organization's cultural environment, as expressed through the framing of organizational missions and activities, is also associated with access to international institutions.

The need for incorporation of elements of the "old" institutionalism becomes even more apparent when we consider the implications of this study for how we think about the historical relationship between religious and secular authority in transnational space. As stated above, the patterns of religious NGO stratification identified in Chapter Four are consistent with patterns of stratification among states. It is my contention that this coincidence is due to the long-term historical co-development of Christian religion and the northern-dominated world system (see, for example, Meyer 1991). In spite of centuries of institutional differentiation, the similarities in culture and structure as a result of these historical relations are imprinted in the patterns of stratification that currently exist among religious groups in Human Rights.

My research has empirically established one mechanism – certification - through which this historical relationship between western religious and secular authority is maintained. What is still needed, however, is an institutional analysis focused on the historical processes through which that relationship and its associated advantages came to be embedded in the structures of international institutions, and in the field of human rights more generally. What exactly were the configurations of competing actors, interests, and

assumptions throughout the past century that have influenced the current patterns of, and rules defining, nongovernmental access to and exclusion from international institutions? Were there competing models for civil society participation, and why did the one that we observe today prevail? Are the biases in favor of certain types of NGOs the outcome of strategic design, or would they more accurately be described as unintended consequences of a contested institution-building process? The findings of such a study would speak to questions about the potential for institutions to function as sites of social change, as opposed to forms of bureaucratic machinery through which transnational inequalities are institutionalized and reproduced.

My claim that historical relations between religion and the state remain relevant in transnational relations also has important implications for secularization theory – particularly for how we think about the influence of institutional differentiation on religion-state relations. Standard accounts of modernization assume that religion-state separation is associated with religious decline. I am suggesting, instead, that religion and state be conceptualized as continually evolving, linked institutions.<sup>5</sup> Just as religious systems can internally evolve and transform while retaining coherent and distinctly religious identities, so too can the relationship between religion and state evolve, and take on myriad forms, with the two institutions nonetheless remaining linked. That is, religious establishment is only one form of inter-institutional relationship that permits advantages to

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion and model of linked, co-evolving institutions, see Edgell's work on religion and family (Edgell 2002).

flow between religious and secular forms of authority. Just as religion-state linkages were important during colonialist expansion, such linkages remain important, in spite of disestablishment, in the current cycle of global expansion, and as governance shifts toward the international arena. However, we need to look to different institutions and processes in order to understand how those links operate in the current context of global transformation.

#### *Avenues for Future Research*

If the claims I have stated above are correct, the links between western religion and secular states will come into sharper relief as research on religion in civil society moves toward the global level of analysis. Likewise, empirical examinations of the relationship between religious and secular authority will increasingly require that we look beyond the nation-state, perhaps even beginning with the global arena, working our way down to the national level of analysis. Rather than studying religious participation in global civil society as an extension of previously state-centered participation in politics, we need to pay more attention to how domestic religion-state relations are, and always have been, conditioned by the advantages that flow between religious and secular authority in transnational space.

Consider, for example, the relationship between the proliferation of Evangelical religion in Latin America and the political power accrued by Evangelical Christians in the United States in recent decades. One way to examine this relationship would be to begin with the rise of the Christian Coalition in American politics



during the Carter and Reagan years, and then show how political opportunities for the Christian Right during these years yielded resources for widespread expansion into Latin America. An alternative approach, however, would be to begin with the mutual interests that existed between the Reagan administration and Evangelicals in Latin America (i.e. in transnational space), and from there explore how those mutual interests may have created the opportunities and resources necessary for religious conservatives to form their formidable domestic lobby in the US. That is, I would seriously consider the possibility that the Christian Coalition might be, in part, a consequence of the Religious Right's usefulness in U.S. foreign policy. Such examinations of religion-state linkages in global space could add a new level of complexity to our understanding of the power currently wielded by religious groups in domestic politics.

Likewise, in contrast to my research, which has focused on the more subtle ways that power is exerted and contested in the NGO universe, a considerable amount of research remains to be done on the explicit ways that international politics influence religious voice and social capital among NGOs. For instance, the cognitive association of Islamic organizations with "fundamentalism" or "terrorism" cannot be fully comprehended without considering Middle East politics and, more recently, the US led "War on Terror." In this historical moment, not only do the prerogatives of powerful states leave Islamic human rights organizations themselves vulnerable, but non-Islamic organizations that affiliate with or financially support them run the risk of being investigated as possible supporters of "terror" as well.

The impact this has on Islamic coalition and network building surely must be damaging and is worthy of scholars' attention.

In-depth studies of individual cases where NGOs have been denied accreditation could also provide insight into the ways in which states' interests condition the terms of NGO participation. Research in this direction would not only address questions about NGO autonomy, but also about political factors determining which types of human rights issues and campaigns are given priority within the NGO universe.

Consider, for example, the case of Christian Solidarity International (CSI), an NGO that has focused extensively on slavery in the Sudan. At the time of my interviews with members of CSI (2000), its leaders had recently seen their UN consultative status revoked. The reasons for the NGO's loss of accreditation were undoubtedly complex, but were in large part due to its decision to allow a representative from a separatist group, the *Sudanese People's Liberation Army*, to speak at the United Nations about widespread enslavement of Christians by Muslims in the Sudan. CSI's actions not only embarrassed the Sudanese government, but violated the norm of "political neutrality." Subsequently, at the request the Sudanese government, the NGO's consultative status was revoked, ostensibly on procedural grounds.

But it is not only the politics surrounding CSI's loss of accreditation that could be illuminated through a scholarly investigation of this case. It would also shed light on the relatively low profile that slavery in the Sudan, until recently, had held in the

international community. As of the year 2000, CSI had already been reporting on slavery in Sudan for several years. Yet, it was not until 2004, four years after the marginalization of CS I, that the atrocities within the Sudan came to the forefront of the international public's attention, and became a central focus of the mainstream human rights community's agenda. How can we explain the international community's marginalization of this issue? And why is it that now, in the midst of so many other crises, attention has finally turned toward the Sudan? This controversial organization, CSI, and transformations in its relationship with the United Nations and the international human rights community, could provide a lens through which to examine these questions, and would bring into sharper relief the types of power that states and other actors exercise over NGOs and priority's in global civil society.

Equally important, however, is the need to for more culturally sensitive studies of international institutions that would complement the aforementioned emphasis on states' interests and exertions of power. By "culturally sensitive" I mean that studies of international institutions could benefit from attention to the ritual functions of IGOs. The relevance of ritual and symbol became very clear to me while analyzing the transcripts from the Special Session on HIV/AIDS. At stake in the debates that ensued over homosexuality during this session were not so much the technical aspects of the UN's programmatic objectives, but the values and ideological commitments that were being affirmed through the largely identical and repetitive speeches given by each diplomat. The position taken by the

Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was not controversial because it posed any real threat to HIV/AIDS programs, but because the OIC's (and the Vatican's) speeches constituted a rupture, a symbolic discontinuity, in the ritual affirmation that was the Special Session. Perhaps the representative from Norway illustrated this best when she proclaimed that what was at stake in the debates over homosexuality was nothing less than "the soul of the United Nations."

This is not to say that the conflicts that ensue in the symbolic realm are "merely" symbolic in their consequences. As Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999) have aptly demonstrated, normative human rights commitments, even when not legally binding, do provide standards against which actors are subsequently held accountable for their actions. There is no reason to assume that Risse et al.'s model would not equally apply to concessions made in favor of religious groups (including states), even when those claims go against the grain of hard-won achievements in Human Rights.

The fact that organizational stratification and institutional power are in part contested in the realm of culture is important because of what it might tell us about how social change (for better or for worse) happens within and through institutions. I would still maintain that IGOs, by and large, support the interests of their more powerful members, and will continue to function in this manner. However, the fact that institutional power is maintained in part through conformity to norms, and is legitimated through ideology, lends a certain plasticity to institutions in terms of their openness to challengers. Insofar as conflicts are played out on the terrain of

culture, challengers can innovate and assert claims to an extent that would not be possible if structure and power were purely matters of material resources. The transformation of and contest over “cultural rights” provides one illustration of how minority groups can reinterpret hegemonic discourses to their advantage, thereby altering the playing field where cultural minorities and majorities compete for recognition of their claims and for influence. Although this plasticity may not fundamentally change the nature of the game (i.e. it ultimately remains a game whose rules favor those in power), it does nonetheless add an element of unpredictability with regard to the identities of dominant and subordinate groups.

On a final note, this research illustrates the need for a reflexive approach to sociology that takes into account the hegemonic status that secular, rationalist ideologies hold among western intellectuals. As Peter Berger recently pointed out, “A purely secular view of reality has its principal social location in an elite culture,” which Berger describes as global and comprised of people with Western-type higher education (Berger 1999, p.10-11). He goes on to say that, “This subculture is the principle ‘carrier’ of progressive, enlightened beliefs and values. While its members are relatively thin on the ground, they are very influential, as they control the institutions that provide the ‘official’ definitions of reality” (Berger 1999, p.10).

The problematic relationship of the researcher to rationalism does not mean that social scientists should abandon the scientific method as a tool for understanding the social world. It should, however, serve as a reminder that, when studying a social

phenomenon such as “world culture,” we are, in effect, studying ourselves. The very methods we use, and even the presupposition that we can “know” this phenomenon through the application of scientific principles, makes us the ultimate enactor of those very principles toward which we are committed to taking an objective approach. This closeness to the subject of our research can make it all too easy to lose sight of the fact that both religious and secular ideological systems, despite their differences, are both, nonetheless, ideological systems and should be approached and evaluated according to the equivalent standards. There is no obvious reason why scientists should permit rationalism to claim for itself an inherent affinity with such values as universalism, equality, or “truth,” any more so than we permit religion to assert such claims without critically examining the evidence. Paradoxically, reflexive attention to the cultural features of social science will not only move it in a more critical direction, but will allow for the greater objectivity that is required for empirical research.

Appendix A  
Interview Letter

August 23, 2000

World Federation of Methodist  
and Uniting Church Women  
777 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

Dear Ms. Apeadu:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department at Cornell University, completing a dissertation on religion and international human rights activism. As you may know, much of the scholarship on international activism lacks attention to, or ignores all together, the significant role that religion and spirituality play as sources of inspiration and resources for participation in social justice movements, including movements on behalf of religious rights. This summer, I will be conducting interviews with human rights activists to better understand how religion and spirituality fit into what is increasingly referred to as an emerging "global civil society." I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you or representatives from the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women to discuss these issues.

I estimate that the interview will take approximately one hour and will focus primarily on the concerns and challenges faced by activists and professionals whose work is, at least in part, inspired and supported by religious or spiritual beliefs and organizations. I am especially interested in discussing organizations' relationships with international institutions, and the importance of religion and belief to issues such as institutional access, resource capacity and intercultural dialogue.

My intention is for this project to be useful to human rights supporters in their efforts to build bridges across religious and secular traditions and to assist in efforts to create more culturally diverse and inclusive institutions. A summary of this study, once completed, will be provided to all participants. If you are willing to participate, please indicate below and return this letter in the enclosed envelope, or respond by e-mail to the following address: [elb10@cornell.edu](mailto:elb10@cornell.edu). Your participation will be extremely helpful and much appreciated.

Kindest Regards,

Evelyn L. Bush  
Doctoral Candidate  
Cornell University



\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, a representative from our organization will participate in an interview. We have representatives in or near the following locations:

Name of representative to contact

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## APPENDIX B WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS NGO?

To examine how *secularism* and *individualism* might be associated with IGO ties, I initially distinguished among five types of organizational missions that differ from one another in terms of their consistency with the principles of secularism and individualism.

1. I labeled the first mission *secular human rights*. These religious NGOs are no different from secular NGOs in terms of how they publicly frame their approach to human rights. Their mission statements give no indication that they are involved in evangelism, and they make no distinctions regarding the religious preferences of either victims of human rights violations or the activists that their organizations mobilize. If they focus on religious freedom, it is framed universally, without discrimination against or preference for any particular religion. Pax Christi International is an example of an NGO that was coded as *Secular Human Rights*. Their mission statement reads in part as follows:

Pax Christi International is a non-profit, non-governmental Catholic peace movement that began in France at the end of World War II. Today, it is comprised of autonomous national sections, local groups, and affiliated organisations spread over 30 countries and 5 continents, with over 60,000 members worldwide. The

movement works in all areas of peace but has a specific focus on demilitarisation, security and arms trade, development and human rights, and ecology.

Pax Christ International's work is based in spirituality. It is a Catholic organisation but welcomes all religious groups and strives for dialogue and co-operation with non-governmental organisations and movements working in the same field – Christian, Jewish, Muslim and non-religious.

2. The category *Faith-Based Activism* includes NGOs whose stated goal is to inform or mobilize persons or groups of a particular faith tradition into human rights activism. An example of an NGO coded as *Faith-Based Activism* is The Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Their mission statement reads, in part:

Buddhist Peace Fellowship's open-hearted engagement with the world is expressed through expanding programs in the United States and Asia. Through BPF, Buddhists of many different traditions are developing individual and group responses to socially conditioned suffering....

Through our worldwide network of members, we strive to bring peace where there is conflict, to promote communication and cooperation among Buddhist sanghas, and to alleviate suffering wherever possible..... The mission of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), founded in 1978, is to serve as a catalyst and agent for socially engaged Buddhism. Our aim is to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems. BPF's programs, publications, and practice groups link Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion with progressive social change.

3. I labeled the third category *Collective Rights*. This category includes organizations that explicitly work to protect the rights of their own religious group. They are distinct from NGOs that promote religious freedom in general, which were coded as *Secular Human Rights*. To the extent that they deviate from the individualist religious rights frame, (i.e. their focus on a single but entire group implies a more collectivist orientation toward human rights), they are at odds with world cultural discourse. Action for Post-Soviet Jewry is an

example of an NGO coded *Collective Rights*. Their mission statement reads, in part, as follows:

Action for Post-Soviet Jewry, Inc. (APSJ) is a private, non-profit, human rights organization dedicated to helping Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU) as well as participating in general human rights work and humanitarian aid projects. APSJ was founded in 1975 in response to the struggle of Jews in the Soviet Union to emigrate and to live freely as Jews.

4. The category *Religious Reform* includes NGOs that emphasize *the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups within religious communities*. These NGOs typically focus on improving human rights practices, often for women, within particular religious institutions, communities or cultures. *Religious Reform* is very compatible with individualist norms pertaining to religious freedom, in that it privileges the rights of the individual over those of the group. An example of an organization coded as *Religious Reform* is the Quixote Center, whose mission statement reads, in part:

The Quixote Center is a faith-based, social justice center working with people who have few resources for their struggles. We strive to make our world, our nation and our church more just, peaceful and equitable in their policies and practices.

Catholics Speak Out [a program of the Quixote Center] works for reform in the Catholic Church, and adult responsibility for faith. In particular, the project works towards equality and justice within the Church and dialogue between the laity and hierarchy on issues of sexuality, sexual orientation and reproduction.

5. The category labeled *Individual Rights* includes NGOs whose mission includes the *promotion or expansion of a particular religious tradition*. These organizations explicitly state that evangelism, religious education, or similar attempts to spread their religious tradition, are amongst their goals.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, *Individual Rights* is at odds with the secularism of world culture, in that it implies the promotion of religion as framework for defining the moral order. It is implicitly consistent, however, with the individualist interpretation of human rights, which emphasizes the rights of individuals to convert or

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<sup>1</sup> An NGO was not coded as MISSION4 if its goal was only cultural preservation in the form of historical societies, libraries or museums.

seek converts. An example of an NGO coded as *Individual Rights* is Catholics Against Capital Punishment, whose mission statement reads, in part:

Catholics Against Capital Punishment was founded in 1992 to promote greater awareness of Catholic Church teachings that characterize capital punishment as unnecessary, inappropriate and unacceptable in today's world. It does this in three ways:

- \* By disseminating news of Catholic-oriented anti-death penalty efforts through its newsletter, CACP News Notes, and this web site.

- \* By communicating the Church's teachings on the issue to federal and state lawmakers, especially those who are Catholic, urging them to resist proposed legislation imposing or extending the use of the death penalty, and to work for repeal of such laws currently on the books.

\* By encouraging members of the Catholic hierarchy, clergy and religious groups to speak out more forcefully against capital punishment.



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